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1921

RIFLE AND ROMANCE

IN THE INDIAN JUNGLE

A RECORD OF THIRTEEN YEARS

BY CAPTAIN A. I. R. GLASFURD
OF THE INDIAN ARMY

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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PREFACE

FEW subjects of such comparatively circumscribed bounds have elicited more literature than has Indian sport. Since the earliest days of the European exploitation of our great Eastern dependency, books dealing with this interesting theme have followed one another in steady succession, until every phase of Indian sport, or *shikár*—to borrow the Persian word so suitably and comprehensively denoting all forms of the pursuit of game—has long since been ably portrayed by such sportsmen and naturalists as Forsyth, Sanderson, Baker, Gordon-Cumming, Williamson, Rice, Sterndale, Blandford, and others.

This accumulation of works has apparently resulted in the "last word" having been said, so that, except for those who may be in search of the complete store of information contained in the writings of these bygone giants in *shikár*, little remains to tempt further the public palate; and books of this class are now apt to be picked up in listless fashion, a random page being idly turned to find, in the time-worn references to jungles, *nullahs*, beaters, and those exasperating shots "exactly through the heart," little more than a butcher's bill eked out with businesslike hints as how best to come within reach of the game, and what means to employ in order to ensure its speediest downfall.

Besides this, fostered no doubt by the fact that the majority of the standard works on the subject are far from up to date, and deal with the India of a bygone day, there

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is a tendency to assume that very little big game now exists in a depreciated Hindustan, or that such as does yet remain is only to be obtained through the agency of native potentates, on elephant-back, and at a vast expenditure of rupees.

Considerations such as these render it only fair to reader and writer alike that an indication of the aim of these pages should be put forward, not only in extenuation of yet another publication on *shikár*, but as a guide to their contents, so that their nature may be evident to prospective readers of a critical turn of mind—more especially to those who have tired of the subject as presented in the type of work to which allusion has been made.

The present volume, then, does not attempt to go over old ground. Its aim is rather to present an old though still engrossing subject in what is perhaps a novel manner; to carry the reader into more direct contact with the surroundings of the Indian sportsman and naturalist, and, while avoiding as much as possible the recital of personal experience with its stereotyped accompaniments, to lead him into the jungle with all its fascinating variety of scene and season, hill and plain, where in spirit he may make acquaintance or renew an intimacy with its shy denizens and their habits.

To this end an effort has been made to bring out those apparently unimportant details, the light and shade so to speak, that, apart from the mere gratification of a hunting instinct, go so far to complete the pleasurable whole of a hunter's wanderings. The fact that the illustrations are the work of the author himself may, it is hoped, help to counteract their lack of art. Although amateurish in execution, they possess a value in being essentially correct and strictly true to nature—differing in this respect from the fanciful embellishments of the untravelled artist, who works only on second-hand information coupled with a

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vivid imagination—and the landscapes, in which wild beasts are represented as found at home, are in most cases facsimiles of actual localities as they at present exist.

These jungle sketches do not deal with what is perhaps the popular idea of Indian sport—the imposing line of elephants, the gay party, the "file-firing" of the *battue*, and piles of slain. They are merely the records of the quiet solitary *shikári*, who, lacking either the means or the inclination—or both—for the slaughtering of a large amount of game in a short space of time without the exercise of personal effort or woodcraft, works alone, or in the company of a single comrade, and with his simple equipment penetrates to retired spots—the peaceful haunts of game. Here, wandering unaided save by a few trusty followers, he possesses the advantage of being able to trace the habits and daily life of the creatures of the jungle in a way which is denied to those employing more pretentious methods.

At sunset and at dawn, by the light of the moon, from the solitary nightly post, or silently threading the undisturbed forest, he reads the secrets of the wilderness, and becomes, as it were, a subject, not an intruder, of its retired, reserved empire.

It will be noted that the chapters or stories comprising this volume are of varying character—some dealing with the real, others idealistic, and one or two entirely fanciful. They have been written from time to time during a residence in India of some fourteen years, mostly spent in jungly places. A considerable portion of them has been pencilled in the jungle itself; in the shooting tent; while lying out on the hillside; even on moonlight nights spent in lonely *machâns*. The cerebral stimulus afforded by the sometimes eerie experiences of solitarily perambulating a lonely jungle by night, being bottled up in a hole in the ground awaiting the return of the man-eater to his prey, or watching alone at the midnight post in a tree, miles from

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any other human being, must be held to account for the startling excursions into the domain of the purely fanciful. Even in the latter instances, however, no departure has been made from the truthfulness of local colouring and accompaniment; and nothing has been recorded of the ways of wild creatures, human or animal, which is not the actual experience of the author.

That the writer enjoyed, perhaps, unusual advantages for the pursuit of big game will be evident from a perusal of the chapter, "Reminiscences of Junglypur"—"Junglypur" being one of the now deserted cantonments of that portion of the Indian Army so long known as the Hyderabad Contingent. "The old order changeth," and the old Corps—in nomenclature and location, that is to say—has lately ceased to exist; but many still remain who look back with affection to the sporting facilities they enjoyed in its old-fashioned jungly stations.

That big game is still plentiful enough in many places to be come at by the sportsman of small ways and means may prove surprising to some. But such is, happily, the case. And as the Government of India is at last about to institute a Game Law to check the wanton destruction that has been going on for so many years, it is certain that it will considerably increase; thus enabling India to retain at least one of her charms in the Englishman's eyes, and helping in many cases to attract him to the service of the country.

Part of the contents of these pages has already appeared in a small volume published in India during the preceding year, but so much has since been added, that the present publication, which can hardly be termed a second edition, is now issued under a new title; and, in its changed aspect, seems to require a fresh introduction.

A. I. R. G.

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RIFLE & ROMANCE IN THE INDIAN JUNGLE

AN INDIAN SUMMER'S DAY

MORNING

"*Koël! Ko-yel!*" from the feathery tamarinds. The faint breeze accompanying an Indian dawn has died away, and a burning March sun is climbing into a hard blue sky, casting hard blue shadows across the smooth, white, tree-bordered road of the little cantonment.

"*Tok — tok — tok — tok!*" from the glossy new *pipal* leaves hammers the little barbet, all head and beak—if you can see him—and punctuating each monotonous note with a sidelong nod, now right, now left.

Soon Nature will lie wrapped in the noontide silence. The hot weather has come once more, and the exile girds up his loins for resistance, passive though it may be, till relieved at the bursting of the next monsoon rains. The *punkah* has recommenced its weary flap; and many an unhappy individual, uncheered even by that priceless thirst which is now his right, is settling into a quiet hypochondria.

But to the *shikári* come no discomforting thoughts. Let the sun do his fiercest, and the "brain-fever-bird" his worst, while parched leaves eddy in the scorching blast—

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they only remind him that his time of promise is nigh. Unfold the map; visit each old haunt afresh; mark as likely those yet unvisited; welcome the men returned with hopeful news; settle the route, and overhaul rifle and gun. Hurrah! for April jungles and all they hold in anticipation; there are compensations for an Indian summer after all.

NOON

Hot dry jungle crackles under a vertical sun, and the dust of the forest road lies away in a long grey riband behind the rhythmic hoof-beats of our third change of horse-flesh, as a long ride draws to its destination.

Ahead, quivering in the heat-haze, a dip in the low, woody hill country, indicative of a line of river, with those glimpses of dark green groves along its banks. Mother Tapti at last!

The track curves down to cross a tributary stream, and we walk the good mare across its shingly bed, under the low branches of gnarled and hoary mango trees, up which spring and whoop the grey apes that we have disturbed at their midday drink. Far upstream the fresh green of *jámún* covert; downstream great rocks, with some peafowl scuttling away from a little water-hole. A likely place indeed!

We ascend the far bank slowly in deep shade; then off on a final canter. Jungle thins, and gives place to a narrow clearing, its diminutive fields lying reaped and bare; the barking of village curs is heard, and a humble Korku hamlet stands on its knoll, overlooking a fringe of dark trees that border the river below. Our hoof-beats bring out one or two of the jungle men, who, grinning in a friendly way, point to a bend upstream. There, romantically situated in the deep shade of a spreading many-trunked banyan, is the little 80-lb. tent. A *mandwa*, or

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thatched, open-sided shelter, has been erected adjoining it, 'neath which on snowy napery tiffin is ready laid!

We sink into the inviting arms of a long-cane chair.

"Yes, my excellent Abdul, you may remove my boots; but, before all, bear swiftly hither a chalice brimming o'er with nectar such as the *sahibs* do love!

"*Al-hamdu-l-illah!* but that's well worth a thirty-mile ride!

"Two tigers located here, did you say? and the men are away preparing for my honour's hunting? and the lukewarm tub is ready? The gods be propitious indeed!"

NIGHT

The glare of a long, hot-weather day is past, and the misty river breathes cool airs that stir the lighter foliage. An excellent dinner, prepared by the faithful 'Bulbul Amir,' is just over, and a long cheroot glows peacefully as the grateful smoke curls slowly aloft. *Cicadæ* and crickets maintain their ceaseless songs, and from the margin of the pool beyond that dark bank rises the occasional croak of a wakeful frog.

We are set out in the open, away from the now heat-retaining trees, and may gaze straight up into the serene, star-pricked arch of the sky. The moon is up, turning the jungle into fairyland, and its inhabitants, that have hidden in silence during the heat of day, are now abroad, wandering in search of food and water throughout this wonderful tropical night. The nightjars that sail mysteriously about during the crepuscular hour, uttering a strange cry of "*Chyeece—chyeece!*" have taken up their nocturnal call, and "*Chuckoo—chuckoo—chuckoo!*" continuously to each other across the broad shingly river-bed. Very faintly, so far downstream is he, may be heard the distant braying of a *chital* stag.

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Even the presence of aboriginal man seems but to add to the sense of contented peacefulness, the soft "rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub" of a *tom-tom* proclaiming the Korkus awake in their rude hamlet, beyond which the sleeping hills slope down to the narrow valley.

In the distance a glow of little fires shows some of our men occupied with their evening meal, and a murmur of voices behind the camp discloses others, who are engaged in rubbing wood-ashes into a certain broad peg-stretched skin.

Yes! It has been a lucky day, and the first tiger is already bagged. Happy thought that prompted the placing of an extra "stop" at the very spot which he should choose to break out of the beat, and a fatal pause that which he made, right under our tree! A shy, game-killing beast of the denser jungles, what long, weary ways his tracks had led us that hot day, until we "ringed" him, at home, so far from his "kill" of the previous night!

And so he is slain over again. Anticipation, realisation, fond recollection; threefold charm of these forest scenes; pleasures that will be ours long after the jungle knows us no more!

The white sheets look invitingly cool in the moonlight; and the cheroot can be finished there.

"Call me at five o'clock, Abdul!"

How delicious to stretch one's pleasantly fatigued limbs on the smooth linen, and gaze up at the thought-bringing stars, while dreams of the morrow's sport trail gentle sleep in their train.

So the East doth call to us who are her foster-children.

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THE BIOGRAPHY OF A TIGER

THERE is an idea prevalent among many people that the India of the olden day has long since passed away, that her wild beasts have gradually disappeared, until now, save in the wildest parts of the remote interior, the tiger, that splendid feline of world-wide fame and interest, is seldom heard or seen outside the bars of some prison cage. And if one should be so rash as to hint that the "royal" beast is still known to wander within reach of a latter-day civilisation, his almost certain reward is a glance of pity or a shrug of pious reprobation, that in these up-to-date times he should have the hardihood to foist such ancient travellers' tales on an enlightened public.

The traveller new to the shiny East, or the raw recruit for her public services, who, pyjama-clad, stands curious-eyed at the taffrail of the incoming mail-steamer, regarding the wondrous colouring of an Indian dawn as it spreads its green suffusion behind the dark line of the Western Ghâts, and touches the waking city and calm waters of the harbour of Bombay with opalescent tints, will probably dismiss with a smile of scepticism some fleeting day-dream of Indian jungles and tigers amid those very hills before him. Later on, as the mail-train labours upward towards the frowning line of those serrated ghâts, and a disappointingly dry jungle of teak saplings and other bare-twigged trees succeeds the palm-fringed-lagoon-winding country of highly Eastern appearance, through which he

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has been passing for an hour or more after leaving the western metropolis, our new-comer may, perhaps, watch awhile at the window in the hope of noting some sign of wild life in the forests passing panorama-like alongside. But he will be disappointed. And as his train surmounts the buttressing mountains, and steams out over the lifeless and uninteresting upland plains of the Deccan, he may be excused should he acknowledge his anticipations realised and turn to thoughts unconnected with an apparently extinct Indian fauna.

Although these impressions may not be quite correct—for there is still some big game left in the jungles along the ghâts, in spite of its not being accommodating enough to present itself for review by the traveller—the generally gameless appearance of this portion of the country to which he is thus first introduced is bound to have the effect of misleading him to a too hasty conclusion; and his eye will therefore miss a good deal as he is carried further inland, and unconsciously passes through country where the tiger, as well as the other denizens of an Indian forest, is still to be found—if one knows where and how to find him.

In order that the reader may be led naturally and in due order to the scene of this biography, it is necessary that he should accompany us on our way thither. But he should note that the tracts referred to are by no means among those most favoured of game in this country; nor are they likely nowadays to repay the toil of a stranger on sport intent. They have been chosen, in this instance, as perhaps the best known of many localities to the biographer.

Let us imagine that the train has been travelling for about a day into the interior of the peninsula of India, and that a tropic moon is now brilliantly illuminating the wide plains across which it pursues its way. In this wonderful light it is possible to discern from the carriage

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window a distant range of hills, which, first viewed late on the previous evening, are still seen to continue parallel with our course, and some forty miles to the northward.

At the chilly hour of three in the morning we find ourselves standing on the platform of a small and very sleepy wayside station. Our train, after a leisurely halt—apparently made for the purpose of permitting the guard and other officials to indulge in a drink and chat with their local acquaintances—wakes up, and puffs slowly off, leaving us shivering and listening to the far-off howling of jackals and the sleepy shunting of goods trucks by a somnolent engine, until an appropriately mournful coolie has been prevailed on to transport our baggage, with paralysing deliberation, to the post-cart that waits in the dusty road outside.

After another long wait, the tedium of which we endeavour to beguile with a cheroot, the mail-bags at last appear, and are loaded up in the same hopelessly soporific manner. The drooping ponies are revived with vigorous prods, and the post-cart begins to pick its way through the corpse-like forms of slumbering native passengers strewn in the dust of the station yard, jolts through a hushed and walled native town, and settles down to a steady swing, under the moon, along an apparently interminable, straight, acacia-lined, country road.

We have been asleep some time, when a ghastly blare from our Jehu's cracked bugle startles us suddenly from our aching slumber, and announces the approach of a changing-station. Our pair of undersized "tattoos" is forthwith cast adrift—one to roll luxuriously in the roadside dust, the other to pick a squealing, biting, heel-waged quarrel with a roadside acquaintance. Then a fresh and most unwilling pair of ponies is backed and pushed into the rotten string-mended harness, whacked into a semblance of unanimity, and off we rattle again.

Dawn at length begins to show faint and far over the

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plains as the post-*tonga*—a noisy, dilapidated, low, two-wheeled, white-hooded rattle-trap, two seats in front and two behind—sways and clatters swiftly from side to side along the smooth white road behind the heaving backs of the emaciated ponies as they hand-gallop dustily northward. The growing light gradually discloses the surrounding stretches of cultivated country covered with tall crops of fast-ripening *jowári* or giant millet, with here and there a break in the sea of corn that gives vista-like views of other and hedgeless fields lying bare from the plough or grown with cotton, linseed, wheat, and other low crops. A few scattered, rounded clumps of trees dot the distance. Still far away north, but drawing perceptibly nearer, lies our range of hills, now blushing pink and purple in the level rays of early daylight. We pass a string of native bullock-carts, the patient bell-tinkling cattle crawling unguided along the roadway with their drivers muffled up fast asleep behind them. A grey partridge runs swiftly from the roadside, whirrs up, and skims curve-winged away.

"*Haran, sahib!*" ("Antelope, sir!") remarks our taciturn *tonga* driver, pointing with his stumpy whip. We see a number of fawn-coloured forms, only a hundred yards distant, slowly walking across one of the open glades in the millet; some gazing hard at us, others nibbling the young wheat. Behind them stands a beautiful black and white creature with long spiral horns—the buck. It is our first sight of that numerous and prolific animal, the Indian antelope. Ahead of the post-cart another long line of the graceful creatures goes leaping and bucking across the road in high bouncing bounds. Were it not for the tall crops which now hide them from our view, three or four separate herds might be seen at the same moment on these fertile plains; and the sportsman so minded may pick out the finest buck at his leisure.

And so the *tonga* rolls on its way; past mud-walled

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village, grove, and cornfield, over bridges spanning broad reaches of sandy river-bed, whither, with bare bronze arms steadying the great brass water-pots poised so picturesquely on their heads, the village women take their slow and graceful way.

Four hours pass. The hills at last seem quite near. The cracked bugle announces the arrival of the "mail." And, thirty miles from the railway, the post-*tonga* rolls into its destination, depositing us before a clean-looking colour-washed building. A servant salaams profoundly in the verandah, and shows us into a surprisingly comfortable suite of furnished apartments. "Certainly! A warm bath shall be instantly ready. And—will the *sahib* order breakfast?"

This welcome half-way house is but one of the numerous "Dák Bungalows," or rest-houses, furnished by a paternal Government for the shelter of travellers or its servants on tour. The obsequious slave is its representative agent.

The range of mountains rising so steeply from the plain some six miles away to the northward is the southern face of the Sátpurás, that great basaltic chain of flat-topped hills, which, originating at an altitude of some five thousand feet in the Western Ghâts, goes slanting across almost the entire breadth of India to decline gradually into the jungly wastes of Chutia Nagpur nine hundred miles to the far east. And as we set out once more, on horseback, having rested during the heat of the day, they rise up before us—a long, yellow, rampart-like wall of mountain region, capped by the flat-topped rock-girt plateaux so prevalent in the "trap" formation.

The southern slopes, exposed to the full force of the sun and yearly rains, present a somewhat barren aspect, and though the season is but early December, not three months since the monsoon deluges ceased, the trees, chiefly those of the *Boswellia* species with their tortuous, sulphur-coloured arms, have to a large extent shed their leaves.

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The road we follow has been built to facilitate the timber trade of the Government forests in these regions, and it rises gently for the first five miles to the lower foot-hills. Here the hillsides, barren-looking at a distance, are seen to be covered with long, dry grass and a thick coppice of small jungle trees. The road now begins to wind its way through park-like glades, the hills enclosing them on either side growing even higher and steeper, till, some ten miles out, we are traversing a deep-cut valley. Thicker jungle now clothes its heights, rearing up precipitously to right and left; large orchid-clasped evergreen trees cast a deep shadow across the roadway; a little red barking-deer—the rabbit of Indian woodland—leaps coughing into the grass; and the clear waters of a now shrunken mountain torrent steal gurgling through their bed of boulders from sunlight to shade.

Shortly the road begins to climb abruptly and zigzag-wise upwards. An hour later we have surmounted the ascent, and a cool breeze blows refreshingly in our faces as we canter along on the level, three thousand feet above the sea.

A gap in the woody hills now comes into view not far ahead, and, as we enter and pass it, the road, of which glimpses may be caught through the trees as it goes winding down below us, is seen to turn to the left and descend into a deep glen. The more open forests have been left behind, and the mountain-sides below us and on the far side of the valley are hidden by a much thicker, denser growth, principally composed of teak, and now glowing golden brown and green in the failing light. Far below, winding along the bottom of the glen, runs a long fringe of taller, darker forest trees, the glint of a solitary pool showing far off among them. The valley before us forms the head-waters of the Sípna river, itself an affluent of the greater Tapti. Widening out as it recedes mile on mile westward, it leads the eye away

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past an apparently endless succession of jungle-smothered mountain ranges till lost in the infinitely distant purple haze below the dull red orb of the setting sun.

A profound and solemn silence, that is but accentuated by the faint ceaseless trilling and chirping of *cicadæ* and crickets, broods over the wild scene.

As the sun dips below the horizon, a roosting peacock cries mournfully somewhere far away.

The distant bark of some wandering deer floats up from the depths of the gorge.

A cold air comes soughing upwards through a precipitous gully, creaking the bamboos uneasily, and stirring the dry brown leaves of wild plantain that clothe the darkening slopes around. A sense of melancholy supervenes. Unarmed as we are it seems time that we sought the lights of camp; for these weird surroundings and huge silent hills are suggestive of things that may lurk in the deepening shadows, and seem to watch us with invisible eyes.

So do we enter the forests of the Melghât and arrive at the confines of the tiger's own domain.

* * * * * *

It is an early December morning in the Sátpurás. The still air of the deep glen of the Sípna is bitterly cold, and dank with surcharged dews that have heavily saturated the long fresh grass and surrounding jungle, and the calm surface of a long pool that lies along the grey bed of the shingly mountain stream is shrouded in clinging white vapour; the temperature of the water, sun-warmed as it is by day, being several degrees higher than that of the atmosphere at dawn.

Overhanging the river-bed from either bank, and helping to wrap the scene in yet deeper shadow, stretches a long, vista-enclosing fringe of great umbrageous trees, their gnarled roots washed bare by the mountain freshets that

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during the rainy season fill this wide-banked space with an irresistible flood. Close above the pool the steepness of the bank is somewhat worn away, and here a rut-worn cart track descends to cross the broad Sípna, on its way westward from the jungle hamlet of Pili. Beyond the river the forest road is at once lost sight of in long grass and the tall straight trunks of the big-leaved teak trees; it is but a passing glimpse of man's influence in these remote tracts, one of the slender threads he has drawn through the untamed woods.

Far upstream the forest river takes a bend to the right, its shore opposite the abrupt angle piled high with huge rotting tree-trunks and other heavy driftwood swept there by the floods of late September; and through this one break in the enveloping jungle the surrounding teak-clad hills are seen to rise tier on tier, glowing mauve-pink in an early sunlight that has not yet pierced its way to the dark valley itself, their distant woody summits standing sharp-cut against a clear blue sky. High up in the calm morning air a flight of big green parrakeets cleaves its way with piercing answering cries.

Building on such a huge and inhospitable scale, Nature here seems to have forgotten man, to have excluded him from this stern wild scheme; and it is with a culprit-like sense of trespass that the solitary intruder finds himself standing in these silent woods. The thickness and mystery of the surrounding all-pervading jungle adds a touch of disquietude. How easily a man might utterly disappear in such solitudes! A few paces into that bamboo cane-brake—the rush of some too suddenly disturbed feline—an unexpected meeting face to face with a startled bear—an incautious step on some comatose lurking Russell's viper—or the rash disturbing of that great bees' nest hanging from yonder bough—and he would be seen no more. Nay, in this insect-crammed, life-teeming tropic land he would in a few hours be completely gone!

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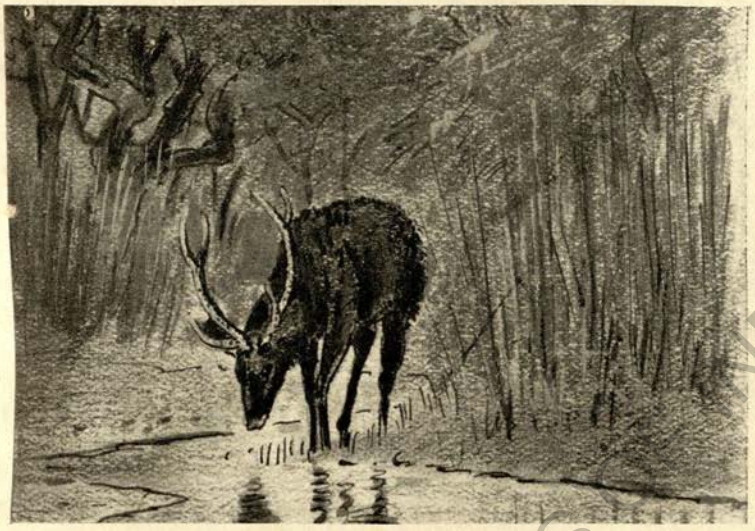
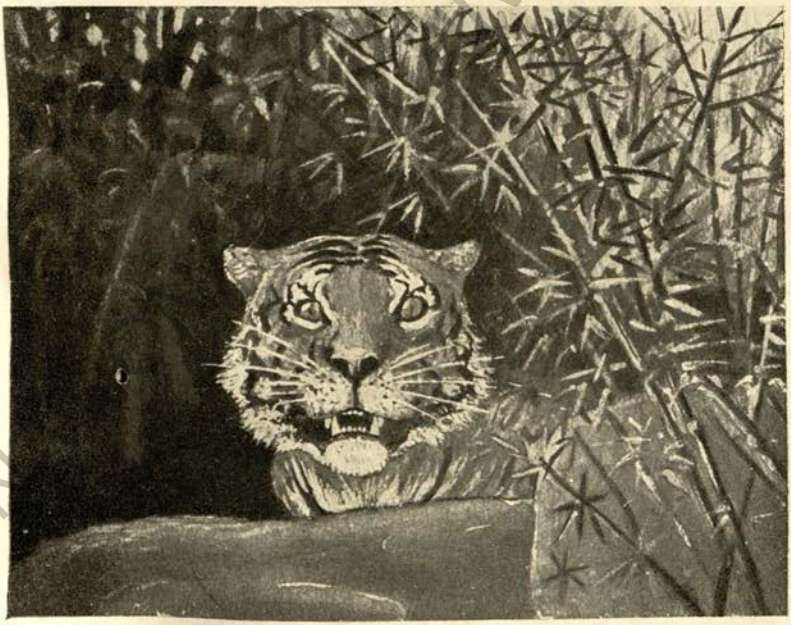


THE SÁMBAR



A HEADPIECE

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Such thoughts, however, seldom trouble the sportsman and naturalist, although they may add to that fascination which all forests exercise over the human mind.

Wherever the broad stretches of shingle are succeeded by sand, or by the moist margins of pools, the tale of the jungle is clearly unfolded. The tracks of creatures that wander by night—and in Indian forests few of the larger fauna move by day—have inscribed a fresh page each twenty-four hours, and it needs but little practice to read what is imprinted thereon. Here the deep and pointed slot of that great woodland stag, the sámbar; there the rounder-toed track of a solitary forest boar, as he picked a leisurely and truculent way under this steep bank; and perchance, also, the lately used mud-wallow, in which the discoloured water has not yet had time to clear. See! a prowling panther passed this way during the night, for his footprints overlie all the marks left by the peafowl and jungle fowl that drink before roosting for the night.

It was on just such a cold-weather morning, soon after dawn, down a retired reach of the forest-penned Sípna, that the brown ground-squirrels set up a sudden shrill squeaking, and a bevy of peafowl in the river-bed stretched their long necks, bright-eyed, alert, with clucking notes of warning. Next moment the big birds made rapidly for the shelter of the jungle, some running as only a peafowl can run, others leaping into a heavy flight in order to clear the high bank above them.

Round a corner, a hundred paces away, stood, where nothing had shown a moment before, a vision of banded black and gold. Above the white of chest and chin, yellow eyes, set in a strangely mesmeric forehead, gazed inquiringly down the deserted vista. The lower jaw, with its cruel fangs just bared, hung slightly opened, and projected in that stern manner symbolic all the world over of uncompromising animalism, the saliva on the retracted black lips glistening in the early light, and gently quivering

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with the vibrations of a throaty breathing. The head was held level and advanced. The great forepaws had come to rest in the middle of a pace. And behind the muscular ridge of the shoulder-blades the sinewy and rounded back curved away into a low-carried, black-banded tail. From its side came solemnly pacing, with absurdly big ungainly paws, a smaller, blear-eyed, and uncouth replica of itself, followed an instant later by yet another that gambolled awkwardly across the sand to halt and sniff at the edge of the pool close by.

Then the largest of the three came heavily pacing forward, each step making a soft, deep crunching in the yielding sandbank.

It was the tigress and her cubs. They were seeking a lair for the day after the nightly prowl abroad. And something in the attitude of the trio seemed to suggest that they had not walked the night in vain!

Sometimes the cubs would lag behind, but mother would wait for them, her head turned, her jaw ever quivering with her warm breath, or vibrating with a low, affectionate purring that sounded like the deepest throbbing note of an organ. Their proper place was ahead of her, where she might best shepherd their waywardness, or rush to defend them; while the way in which she started at a falling dry leaf—she, the mistress over all but one of the other beasts of this forest—was proof of her unceasing solicitude for their welfare.

In such manner the little family party passed slowly down the winding reaches of jungle river-bed, the frogs leaping hurriedly for the pools at their approach. Now and then a land-crab would go scuttling off sidewise to its hole amid the stones; and perhaps a heavy paw would descend on it. There would be a crunch or two as the succulent morsel disappeared. Here and there a handsome grey jungle-cock, strutting in the open with his sombre hens, would beat a cackling retreat, and set up his alarmed

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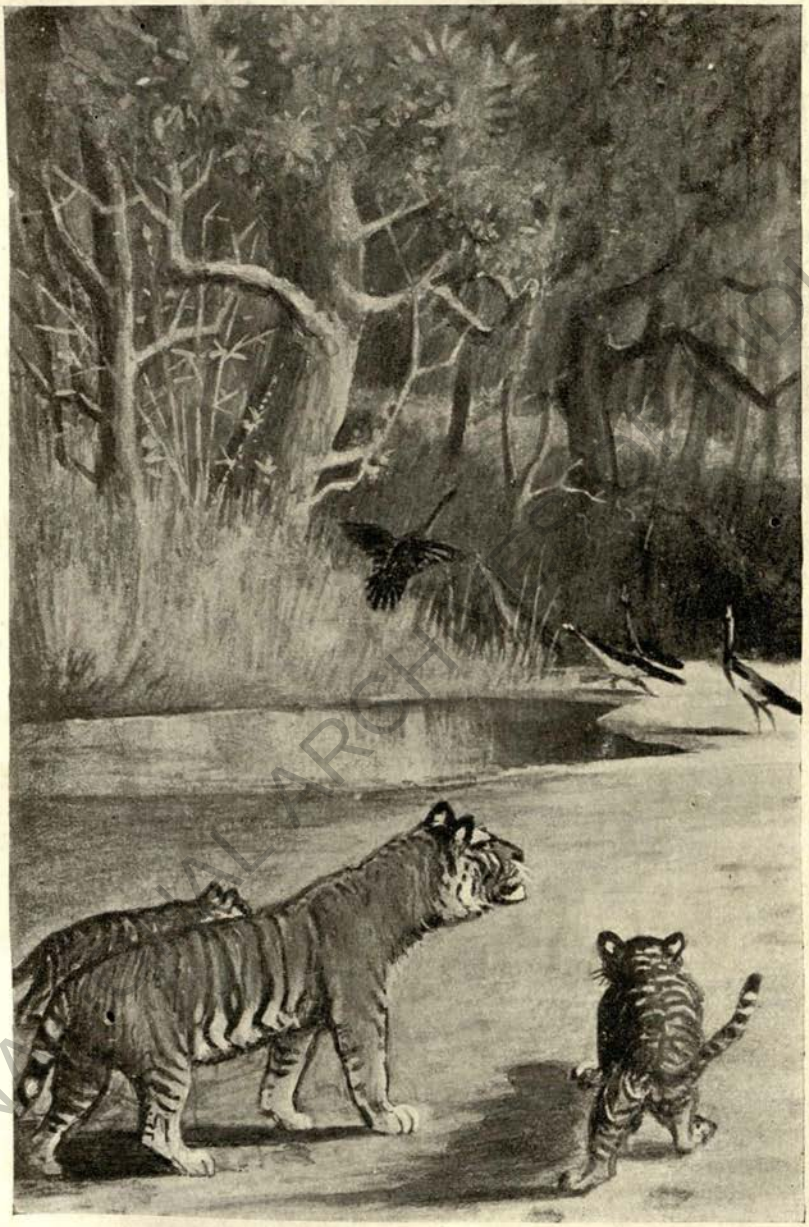

A FAMILY AFFAIR

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"*Kaaw — wick-a-wack!*" from the neighbouring undergrowth; while at one sharp bend a little *khákar*—the *muntjac* or barking-deer—bounced off coughing in alarm, his white flag of a tail cocked high in sudden affright.

Farther down the Sípna's bed a tributary steep-banked ravine joined it at right angles, and opposite this the tigress and her two young hopefuls came to a halt.

For a time the mother stood there, the tip of her tail curving gently from side to side, her gaze fixed downstream. Then she quietly turned and made slowly towards the little side ravine, waited a moment while her cubs passed ahead under a fallen tree, then followed them. The long dry grass into which they had passed closed slowly over her red rump. Tigress and cubs had disappeared.

After some minutes a crow that had been silently watching with beady eyes from a neighbouring bough cocked its intelligent head, and seemed for an instant to lower a filmy eyelid. It depressed its tail and emitted a thoughtful "*Caw!*" Then it dropped neatly from its perch, and flew low up that same side ravine.

There was no further movement in the jungle. Ten minutes later there arose a distant crashing among the trees uphill. Some black-faced, white-frilled monkeys ran and leaped from branch to branch, tree to tree, keeping high off the ground. One of their band, an old greybeard, glared angrily downwards, and, clutching the branches, shook the leafage around him. Then he began cursing bitterly; and the sound of his rating voice came from afar—

"*Ughā—ugh! Ughā—ughā-ā-ā-ugh! Ugh!*"

* * * * * *

Her cubs were growing up fast, and 'twas high time that the tigress should teach them their trade.

At the age of about nine months the little brutes,

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instead of cowering and growling in the grass, and only running up when mother had finished killing her prey and purred for them, had begun to show signs of the growing ferocity of their nature, and spat and erected their little bristles more and more at each dark tragedy in the woods.

The young tiger—for the cubs were of opposite sexes—had by this time shown promise of a more robust growth than had his sister. One day, while together with mother and sister, he was lying up in a leafy, shady nook hard by a shrunken pool; he had wandered a few steps away, and, with head resting on big, outstretched paws, lay watching a drove of grey monkeys, who, fascinated by the awful knowledge that a family of tigers lay under their favourite trees, sat silently and warily aloft.

There was plenty of tree-room elsewhere, and the well-worn path along the tops of the branches afforded them an easy and secure retreat; but the *lungoors* sat there as if mesmerised, unable to tear themselves away from the spot. Perhaps they knew that tigers were no climbers of trees, nor to be feared as the deadly sneaking leopard; at any rate, there they sat, and scratched themselves pensively, or passed about on the higher boughs, silently enough now after all the excited swearing in which they had indulged when first the striped trio had come up the ravine below. *Presbytis entellus*, their scientific nomenclature. And well it suits them, the grizzled old elder of the jungle and his family—solemn old presbyters and frisky youths; slim monkey-maidens; staid monkey-matrons, each with a moaning, puling babe carried clinging tightly to her breast. Now and then there came a little pattering in the dried leaves below, and fragments of jungle nuts and seeds would descend from aloft.

Mother tigress and sister lay panting in the heat, hardly visible in the deep shade that fell round their sand-girt pool; but the young tiger had stretched himself somewhat apart, and with solemn, fearsome, upturned orbs steadily

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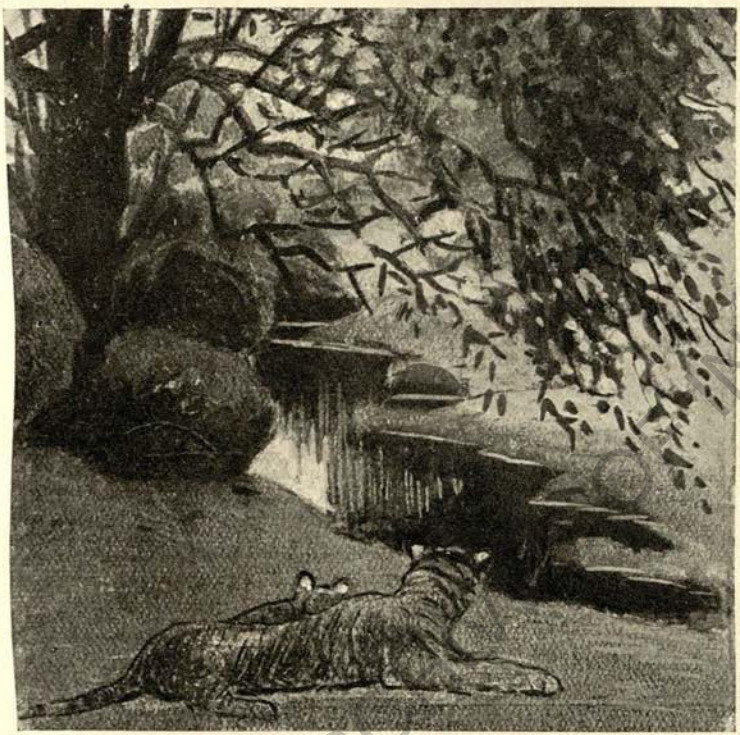
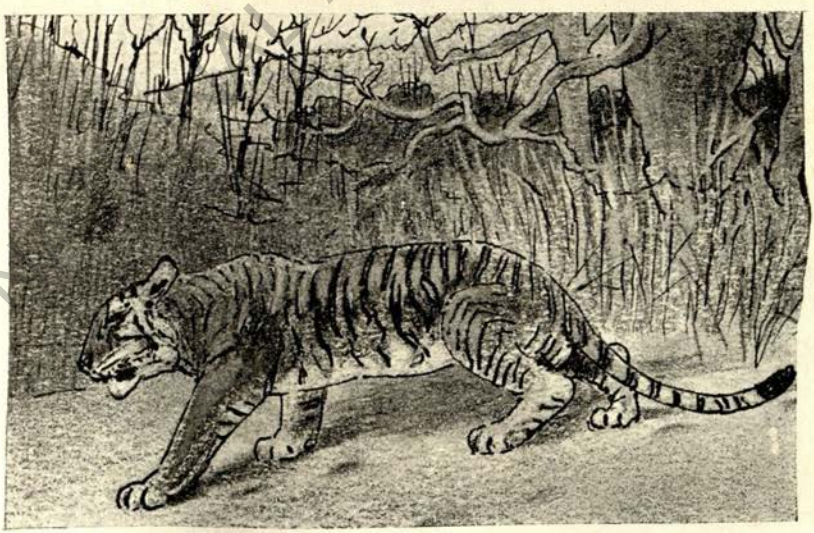


LAY PANTING IN THE HEAT



OFF TO THE POOL

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watched every movement of the monkey folk. Hence, perchance, their very self-conscious affectation of indifference.

The cold season had long since passed, and the late morning sun now mounted steadily higher and hotter till it blazed pitilessly in a deep cobalt sky, against which the frescoed limbs of naked trees gleamed yellow-white and bare. The woods were very still; they were sinking into the dead calm of burning noontide, when naught is to be heard but the incessant "sizz—sizz—sizz" of crickets and of *cicadæ*.

Now it is at this very hour of high noon that old *lungoor*, our wary presbyter of the forest, and his family are wont to slake their thirst, so at last the troop aloft began to shift uneasily and think of moving off to water in some other ravine where tigers lay not and security seemed assured. So there was a swaying of branches. First one old hoary elder, then another, then the younger members of the party ran along the accustomed thoroughfare in the tree-tops. A spring, a clutch, a downward-bending bough and rustling leaves. And so from tree to tree.

Slowly the herd passed away. Then the maiden *lungoors* —slender limb and drooping tail—then the mothers—fuss and importance. At last none were left save a solitary dame with her cachinnating infant.

One last grab at a tempting succulent *téndú*, one last picking asunder and pouching of the tasty fruit, and she rose, little one clasped to breast, walked down a curving bough, paused nonchalantly an instant for the leap—then, oh horror!—she dropped her monkey-child!—a frantic, despairing clutch!—but 'twas gone!

The young tiger below flinched and spat at something that struck ground close beside him with a sudden whirling thud. He furtively glanced sidewise. A callow little monkey lay there gasping and moaning thinly, then it

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began to drag itself painfully along the ground. The tiger-cub watched it curiously at first. He was undecided whether to remain cowering there or run away back to mother. After a while he crept forward, tense-limbed and trembling, and, stretching out his nose, cautiously smelt in its direction. His hair bristled. Suddenly he drew back. Still the young *lungoor* crawled feebly away. The cub crept forward again, growling to himself. As he glared at the creature before him his bristles rose again. He lay flat, his black-spotted ears went back wickedly, his little tail curved convulsively—once, twice. He sprang forward and clutched the little monkey as a kitten pats a worsted ball.

Again he rushed off sidewise, and stared.

Then he crouched once more; his tail twitched again; his baleful, bleary eyes glared. There was a rush—and a moan. He struck strongly into the yielding flesh with sharp, bared claws, ears pressed tightly backward, struck and growled ferociously; and, dragging the monkey down under him, bit it savagely behind the ears. The smell and taste of blood infuriated his nature. He bit and bit again.

A terrible outcry and rushing about meanwhile in the trees; then something scampered yelling close by him through the leaves and grass. Loosing the now inert flesh, he bounded suddenly after it, striking out eagerly and comprehensively with outstretched claws—and the wretched mother-monkey hardly regained her trees in time!

Then the cub returned slowly to that, his first "kill." After smelling it inquisitively awhile, he seized it firmly two or three times in his jaws, stood an instant, then, tail on end, head up, marched strongly away, dragging it with him into the grass and shade. His mother and sister had now approached, and snarled horribly in unison, but he remained in the grass, and, facing them, laid back his

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ears, licked the oozing gore of his victim, and muttered and mumbled diabolically to himself.

After sunset there were more horrible noises and growlings in the ravine, but the cub had to permit the other members of his charming family to participate, and remarkably soon nothing at all remained of that succulent appetiser.

When they moved abroad that night the young tiger walked abreast of mother; nor did he once run in between her great soft forepaws, as hitherto he had been so prettily accustomed to do.

They were pacing silently along a forest cart-track in the soft warm dust, taking advantage of the easy pathway it afforded, as do all the Indian *carnivora* and bears when wandering by night. It was the month of an arid Indian April, that parching, sun-enthralled time when the jungles are at their barest, and almost every tree is stripped of its leaves, which now form a tindery, crackling carpeting on the ground below. The grass is dry and beaten down in long, brittle swathes, the festooning creepers and other tangle born of the warm rain long since dead and scorched, their once luxuriant green seared to a lifeless whitish yellow. The watercourses—even those large enough to deserve the appellation of considerable rivers—lie dry and baked in the quivering heat-haze, long reaches of whitened, lime-encrusted pebbles, sand, or rocky boulders, marked by rare pools at a few favoured spots in their desolate course.

But in spite of these dreary appearances this season is actually the commencement of the Indian spring. Another short month or so, and this parched jungle will be bursting into fresh green leafage; even now the sap is rising so fast that many of the trees are literally raining with the surplus juice, which, expelled from the extremities of budding twigs in tiny spurts, falls spray-like in a delicate gauzy shower around. The *mhowa*, sweet manna-provider

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of these forests, has for some time past been shedding its sickly, fleshy edible flowers in a prodigal profusion, irresistibly attracting all herbivorous animals for leagues around. Here and there a few gorgeous, flaunting, flowered trees dash the monotone of grey-brown jungle with vivid splashes of strong colour; and the hot air is heavy with bold, sweet scents.

All Nature—strange to say in such a terrible and increasing heat—is rising to a renewed and vigorous access of strength, the fierce sun seeming to drag forth the very germs of life and bid them expand and swell and burst! The birds are one and all in wedding dress. Morn and eve, and again at still midday, the alert grey jungle-cocks, debonair roosters of these forest depths, now full plumaged after the first of the biennial moults, scratch and crow blatantly in the copses; while the peacock, spreading out his arrogantly magnificent train in a thousand quivering scintillations of arched green and gold, dances slowly in the open glades, crying plaintively, petulantly, before his admiring hens. Even the insect world obeys the impetus of the season, filling the jungle with an all-pervading song. Big swarms of the dreaded *Bónhra* bees hang like great brown velvet bags from rock and bough, the slightest disturbance—such as sudden movement, noise, or smell—now causing them to take deadly umbrage and descend in their myriads to punish the miserable object of their wrath.

As the piercing rays of the blistering hot-weather sun decline towards late afternoon, and are intercepted by the taller trees, the jungle begins to awake from the diurnal siesta to the anticipated delight of another tropical night. Cooler airs begin to move with light stirrings to and fro. The brief respite 'twixt the cruel blazing day and soft, dangerous night is now taken advantage of by those creatures that have reason to avoid both. The painted sandgrouse come chuckling and whirling in twos

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and threes along the winding river-bed, drop suddenly on the damp sand, and run to become brown stones at the water's shining edge. The monkeys whoop and swing; the red spur-fowls cackle in the rustling leaves; the *khákar* barks hoarsely to his mate on the hillside, the hot orange glow of sunset spreading meanwhile over all the leafless woods.

"*Whe-e-e-ew! Kuck-kaya-kya-kuck'm!*" It is the golden-hackled jungle-cock's salute to the dying day.

For a few minutes there comes a hushed pause. It seems a little greyer, darker, under the bamboo clumps; a frog croaks sleepily in the river-bed; from the forest beyond it a nightjar utters his first low "*Chuckoo-chuckoo*"; something heavy is heard in the distance, stealthily crackling in the leaves far uphill; a tiny fluffy owlet emerges, round and wonder-eyed, from a hole in that great dead tree, and chatters volubly of the coming night.

Then, somehow or other, it is full yellow moonlight; a light scarcely less bright than the evening glow so lately departed, but such a wondrous welcome change from its heat, turning greens to blue, blues to grey, casting a silvern fairy charm over the calm scene with its soothing, cool, deliciously peaceful effulgence.

It is the tiger's hour—the hour of the shadowy leopard. The greater fauna of the jungle are now all issuing forth to seek food and water; to roam, prowl, browse, slay, or be seized in turn, until the breaking of the distant dawn. That rustling in the leaves may be anything—sámbar, bison, the black sloth bear snuffing and scenting his vegetarian and insect diet, or a sounder of scurrying wild hogs—but the feline race walk more circumspectly; for them the silent watercourse, the noiseless forest-edge, and a velvet-padded deliberation.

Away in the distance, faint but clear, rises the unaccustomed sound of a cart bumping over the rough boulders of the dry Sípna, and the staccato cry of a

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jungle-man—no doubt anxiously urging on his belated bullocks as they return to their forest village. Then a last far-off yell, as the cart is evidently forced up the steep bank.

* * * *

A couple of years or thereabouts had passed by, during which time the tigress and her cubs had roamed the jungles together, the same inseparable trio; she teaching them their trade by practical demonstration, watching them as they practised on the smaller creatures on which they preyed, killing the larger animals for them when necessary, driving off any possible enemies by terrifying demonstrations, and generally bringing up her family in the way that every right-minded tiger should go. The cubs learned discretion when mother avoided the sneering patriarchal wild boar; or when the excitable sloth bear, short-sighted and hard of hearing, was left to grub in peace. That there was some other animal, small, red, and many in number, of which they had reason to entertain the alertest vigilance, the young tigers were already aware, but mother had always hurried them away so swiftly that these were not yet fully known to them.

Of man also, that mysterious being, they acquired the necessary knowledge, giving him as wide a berth as the jungle folk gave them; although they were aware of their own power under pressure of circumstances even in this direction, having joined in a horrible uproar one morning, when a party of woodcutters happened suddenly and by chance on their retreat, and mother, springing forward to display all those intimidating qualities with which Nature had endowed her, chased them flying in panic before her terrible voice.

Thus season had succeeded season, and the hot weather found the tigress, and her now nearly full-grown cubs,

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once more in the valley of the Sípna, on just such an evening as has been described.

Amid the darkly enfolding jungle, a little clearing of yellow grass, a moonlit cart-track smothered in silent dust still warm from the rays of the departed sun; and the three tigers, grey shadows casting black shade, stand listening under the moon. A leisurely stroll along the convenient roadway, a dip and a hollow, a damp air, a turn to the right away from the main stream, soft throaty breathings, a passing of dim figures from the moonlight into the dark of overhanging trees, and up the deep-cut tributary course of the Khári *nullah.*

A pleasant night-long prowl was that!—over soft sand, through long grass, along the narrow jungle path skirting the troublesome boulder-strewn bend of the little river near the ruins of deserted Róla, and across the flat, warm, dark rocks. A deliciously cool air that of the damp Khári by night. A nearly full moon overhead. Deep shadows in which to lurk if need be. The waking consciousness of his growing power and strength possessed the young tiger. Mother uttered no sound, but the three all understood, threading this luminous silence, their domain, with a grim joy of lordship over the jungle and its watchful, wandering inhabitants, their slaves—almost all.

And so, gently on, through the tropic night. It may have been towards the small hours of the night, nearer morning than evening, that the striped night-walkers had reached the head of the winding ravine of the Khári, at a point where the little river splits off in every direction, sending its fingers deep into low, jungly hills, whence the monsoon rains pour down their rushing sources; and 'twas after passing up one of these dry upper reaches of the shrunken forest stream that the sudden up-springing of a querulous screaming plover and the faint croaking of frogs betokened the proximity of water.

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Round the next bend of the watercourse a few huge wild mango trees reared their great dark trunks aloft, and drooped and stretched out thick, gnarled, leafy arms, casting a black and impenetrable shadow over the bed of the narrow glen. Under the trees the air was damp and chill. Some small animal ran suddenly startled away, passed into the moonlit grass, and vanished.

A silent, lone, and secret spot.

A slender shaft of moonlight pierced the pitchy canopy of mango leaves, and fell, drawing a silver line at the margin of one little lonely pool.

Round this rare and precious remnant of the life-sustaining fluid the soft black mud had been stirred and puddled, stamped and soiled by innumerable nightly hoofs of the wild pig and deer that inhabited the neighbouring solitudes, and were dependent on this one spot whereat to slake their impatient thirst. Down the steep confining banks many well-worn and dusty little paths through the long grass showed where and how they made their break-neck descents to the water.

The tigress and her young had passed into the shadows beyond the pool. A slight, low purring breathing was heard for a moment, and a stone turned gently—once.

The disturbed plover wheeled a few times against the luminous starry sky; settled; rose again shrieking; then finally settled down in the river-bed, cried—"*Did—did—did-he-do-it!*" or "*Tit-tit-téri!*" (as the native will translate this bird's cry)—and relapsed into silence.

The big black trees, the quiet, unruffled pool, the white moonlight here, the inky shadow there, save for the low chirpings of crickets, or a wakeful frog at intervals, and the quick "*Chuckoo—chuckoo—chuckoo!*" of a far-away nightjar—all were as still and apparently as deserted as the grave.

Now and then a ripened jungle mango would slip from its stalk and drop with a little thud to the ground.

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On an Indian night sounds fall from afar. For long had a most remotely faint rustling been heard beyond the precipitous grass-clothed bank above that pool of the deep-hidden Khári; but not until many more long minutes had passed did the crackle of undergrowth and brushing aside of the harsh grass grow slightly sharper and clearer. Then it stopped. Anon some crumbling earth and loose stones slid rolling down the side of the little gorge.

Long after this the grass rustled gently again. Something was apparently moving about stealthily, undecided whether to advance.

The moon had passed across the sky, until the slope of the bank itself lay in sable shadow, but the luminous line of grass fringing its crest was clearly defined. Very slowly some large dark objects came up from behind it, loomed against the moonlit sky-line, stood motionless for a long time; then descended, and approached in the dark. Extremely faint noises were heard, as if something was coming down the steep bank towards the water-hole below; a leaf cracked once or twice. Whatever the creatures were, they were approaching with infinite caution and the wariest of steps.

But they came on slowly. And in lapse of time a hesitating footfall sounded on the pebbly bed of the Khári.

Beyond the little pool the dry ravine swept round out of the shadow of the big mango trees, and here its stony course shone white with saline incrustations in the bright rays of the moon. And it was against this luminous background that something showed black as it moved warily round the water's edge. There came slowly into view the lean muzzle and big alert ears of the sentinel hind!

There was a soft squelching in the dark, and a sucking noise, as the other deer stood about in the mire round the pool, and lowered their grateful noses to the cool liquid at their feet. Small sounds, as of drinking, of drippings from wet muzzles, came at intervals; but for the most

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part the little herd of sámbar observed a profound quiet. The moon shone clear out in the open, the gentle night swung on her soft sweet course, the stars twinkled down brightly on the silent scene. All was wrapped in a calm, kindly peace, a perfection of lulling repose that seemed to woo every sense into a feeling of quiet security; but it was the smooth treachery, the deadly dissimulation of the jungle by night.

Suddenly, noiseless as a shadow, another figure joined that of the sentry, and two hinds were now clearly outlined in silhouette. Their muzzles began to go out and down—to be quickly raised again with a jerk! Their great ears hinged forward, then back, then forward again. They were gazing intently, fixedly, into the velvety shadows of the big trees.

All of a sudden one of them ran a few quick steps and halted, watchful, with outstretched neck. "*Pónk!*" rang out her abrupt trumpet-note of warning, and echoed up the narrow glen.

"*Whee-ónk!*" she belled again. "*Whee-ónk!*" and startled hoofs were heard stamping in the dark round the pool. Then they too ceased, and all was still as before.

The old hind remained listening, her long head poked anxiously forward, her cold wet muzzle glistening in the moonlight into which she had now emerged, her large widespread ears twitching slowly now and again. Often had she played this game before—better far to stand thus than run into some unknown danger. Perhaps after all it was some false alarm, and the peril was one of imagination alone.

So long did this phase continue that her stiffly posed shape might well have been taken for that of a spectral deer, or perhaps some fantastically twisted tree-stump. But there was a feeling of vague unrest, of danger, in the air of the old Khári that night, a mysterious menacing fear, brooding and lurking under the heavy trees.

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SHELTER FROM RAIN

UP WENT HIS ROUND TAIL

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A sudden clattering of strong, widespread hoofs, and the big hind was galloping in terror up the bed of the ravine. Heavy feet scattered the loose stones and shingle, rushing madly away in other directions in the dark. Then into the moonlight, from the gloom of the big mangoes, shot a long, low, heavy something that rushed swiftly to cut off her course with a rattling throaty sound, and a striking right and left with keen hooking claws. One of those blows went home as the wretched hind reached some long grass in the stream-bed, and a hind leg went down. The momentary check sufficed to seal her fate. Something of enormous weight and strength clutched the nape of her neck, five more cruelly lacerating claws fixed immovably into her long, sensitive nose, and her throat under the ears was seized from below in a terrible grip.

For a moment or so the tigress and her prey remained motionless in this fearsome posture.

Then there was a sudden quick movement, a dull crack, and the poor old hind sank down under her murderess, sank stone-dead, her cervical vertebra neatly dislocated by a past mistress in the art of practical osteology.

Hardly had these kaleidoscopic occurrences flashed by in swift succession than the young tiger dashed up, tail on end, coughing, glaring, and rattling his throat most diabolically. Scarcely less swift than mother he rushed in. With a horrible snarl he flung himself on the "kill" just as mother relaxed that awful grip of her jaws and raised her beautiful head in the moonlight; and in an instant his whiskers were buried and bedabbled in the hind's warm gory neck, which he twisted ferociously from side to side, his ears depressed, as he made most unfilial faces at his parent.

But the time was very unpropitious. Mother was not at that moment at all in a frame of mind to brook any sort of interference. She made a horrid, warning, vomiting kind of noise in her great throat. Then her ears went

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tightly back, her nose puckered up, a deep, brassy "*Wroof!*" rent the still night air; she plunged forward, her huge paw went out correctively, tentatively, thoughtfully—more in sorrow than in anger—and the erring cub rolled over on to his back and into oblivion.

* * * * * *

The moon had set.

Above the dark outline of distant hills a faint and evanescent sheen lingered in the western sky, and marked where her declining disc had lately been slowly cut through by the blackly rising heads of jungle trees; and a complete hush had descended together with that short period of darkness which, a few nights before the time of the full moon, divides the reigns of the nocturnal and diurnal luminaries.

Even the insects had ceased to shrill, and the gentle breathing of the sleeping forest become almost inaudible at this deathly hour 'twixt moonset and dawn. The pool of the Khári ravine, where, so short a while before, such scenes of savagery had been enacted, lay as dark as its enfolding trees. Not even a frog croaked.

It is at this hour, the dark before the dawn, that even the most persevering of hunters, watching from some nocturnal post, finds it almost impossible to fight longer against an insidious somnolence. The head begins to fall forward; the cigar, lit in desperation of the struggle against sleep, slips from slackening fingers; the cloak is drawn instinctively closer against the slight lowering of the tropical temperature; and man has all but succumbed to the mesmeric fingers of Nature.

Slowly the atmosphere chills. A very slight dew is condensing.

High towards the zenith the faintest suggestion of luminosity seems to grow and spread. It is hardly to be distinguished from the star-dust already shining there;

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but, as we watch and conjecture, there is at last a distant twinkle through the spectral limbs of leafless trees, and a bright star slowly rises and glitters on the eastern horizon. We were right. It is the dawn. And that is Lucifer—morning star and light-bringer.

The slumbering forest stirs gently. There is an indefinable but unmistakable feeling in the freshening air, the promise of day. Then somewhere far away the crow of a jungle-cock rises clear.

It is instantly answered by the loud mewing of peafowl from every point of the surrounding woods, where the great birds are perched roosting on the limbs of the largest trees they can find—

"*Mia-a-oo!—Ah-oo!—Aaow!—Ah-h-o-o!—Pah-h-oo!*"

A faint twittering of bulbuls commences in the undergrowth; and soon, in all directions, the jungle-cocks are busily crowing. Spur-fowl, too, with their rapid "Kukurruka—*wack!* Kukurruka—*wack!*"

Now the faintest greenish suffusion is gradually mounting into the sky, pushing the morning star ever higher and paler. The jungle grows perceptibly clearer, and the tips of withered grasses begin to stand out against a shadowy background.

To the watcher who has come through the long night on his tree-perched platform, the soaring glowing forerunners of day bring cheerful but solemn thoughts.

The pale and sickly moonlight of those wakeful hours has been almost more unbearable than the short silence of darkness that succeeded it; and as the shadows of night go trailing away their long, crapy garments, man's soul unconsciously responds to the splendid promise of light and refreshed rejuvenated life now springing below the eastern hills.

Against the shining false-dawn a line of remotest hills is drawn clear and vigorously sharp. The eye begins to gather in a splendid sweep of view. But there is a

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strange melancholia in the wild scene as it is rapidly unfolded in the growing light; a mysterious strain, a sweet, simple melody, at first infinitely faint and distant as the dawn itself, seems to grow and swell until the whole earth—lonely jungle though it be—is pouring it forth in long-sustained, slowly crescendo notes. And with them comes an echo of the half-remembered words—

" . . . whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard—
And took their flight.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Boundless as ocean's tide,
. . . . . .
Rolling in fullest pride . . ."

Then, as that great materialistic sun, with his mighty glowing orb, reddens the distant horizon, the spiritual music seems to cease; but we are supplied with a clue to the forgotten lines—

" Let—there—be—Light ! "

And so another Indian dawn comes up. A flight of chattering parrakeets goes whirling and twisting through the trees.

Now the tree-tops catch a golden glint as the level beams run like long, bright fingers through the newly awakened jungle.

A distant "*Caw !*" comes floating through the calm, cool air, and a couple of the black scouts of the wilderness are seen winging high over the tops of the trees, till something suddenly arrests their keen eyesight. They wheel, cawing, in descending circles and swoops, and settle expectantly not far away.

There was a great screaming of small birds that morning among the bushes of the little river-bed; they congregated in ever-growing numbers, chattering, hovering, and scolding over some as yet unseen object at the

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edge of the grass. As the early sun appeared over the bank and shone hotly down into the ravine, a striped head slowly rose and gazed out with dazed and blinking eyes. Then it sank out of sight again.

Next time the body slowly followed the head, and the young tiger stood up unsteadily, the birds darting and diving round him in the air with harsh, angry cries. He sluggishly stretched himself, looked over his shoulder, and began to walk heavily down to the pool. He was still shaken from that correcting slap dealt him by mother the previous night, and he stood dejectedly awhile at the water's edge before lowering his head and lapping weakly. Then he turned away, and after looking about him for a time, extended himself flat on the warm, dry sand. As the sun climbed higher and hotter, he stirred uneasily once or twice. Finally he rose to his feet and paced slowly up the *nullah*. Where had the others gone?

As he wandered sulkily along and passed close to some tall rank grass, he suddenly stopped, sniffed slowly, gazed round suspiciously, then, still sniffing with outstretched head, cautiously followed a grass-crushed trail into some bamboo-shaded rocks.

Round the corner lay the few unconsumed remains of the hind sámbar which had been the cause of his trouble. The cub lay down at a respectful distance, and waited patiently with his eyes on the carcase. But this time nothing happened. Half an hour later he had crept up in the shade, and was smelling the raw red flesh. Tigers seldom touch their food much after dawn or much before nightfall; but this cub was very hungry. So, with many suspicious halts to listen, he began to feed.

Lying on his side, rolling on his back, growling softly to himself, or patting the "kill" with protruded claws, he fed and gnawed. Once he wandered off to the pool for another drink—but that was very warm, and a puff of hot air, like that from a furnace-mouth, met him as he

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passed across the burning sand. When he returned there were some vultures seated inquiringly on a tree above; and a couple of crows, who had been extremely busy during his absence, flew silently up and perched close by, wiping their strong black beaks.

The tiger now dragged the carcase away under some thick bamboos, and "lay up" not far off. Then he slept.

Slowly the intolerable hot-weather day wore away in silence—but for the creaking of the parched bamboos in the occasional breaths of burning air, and the stirring of their sharp, dry leaves, an occasional "caw" from the indefatigable crows, or the squeaking hiss of the quarrelsome vultures as they greeted the heavy flappings of some new-comer settling among them. The jungle—grass, sand, trees, bamboos, rocks—all were quivering yellow-white in the furiously bright glare of the Indian summer sun, and stood out blindingly against the peculiar dull blue-black of the relentless sky. Such birds as could be seen hiding in the shade held their beaks permanently agape, and all nature seemed to be fainting and gasping in the dreadful heat.

Towards dusk of that day the sense of loneliness overcame the young tiger afresh. He had crept down and smelt at the remnants of the sámbar, but his appetite had been satisfied, and shortly afterwards the hoarse barking of a *khákar* on the bank of the ravine notified that he had wandered forth in the gloaming.

Following them by some instinct, the young tiger prowled after his lost family all that night, but, as they were now some miles ahead of him, to little purpose.

Shortly after dawn he heard a little rattling of earth and stones on the hillside above the game-path that he was following. As he stopped to listen there was a succession of deep, snorting snuffs, followed by a sucking noise. Then the digging recommenced. The tiger moved cautiously towards these sounds. He stepped on a crack-

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BHÁLÚ—VEGETARIAN AND HYPOCRITE

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ling leaf once, and, as he did so, halted quickly, white chin lowered to the ground, yellow eyes wide with inquiry. But the noises continued. Something black and hairy was vibrating diligently behind a neighbouring bamboo-clump. The cub hesitated. His instinct warned him to creep away. But this thing—it was not red. Mother had said *red!*—"Beware of those who are red, small, and many in number!"

This thing in front of him was black. And it was not small. And—it was alone!—so he stole cautiously forward.

The air had been very still, but just at that moment a gentle stirring fanned his ears and passed onwards—the digging and vibrating instantly ceased, the solitary large black object was suddenly quite still. Then it turned about swiftly, and a strange whitey-grey face peered over and beyond him, short-sightedly, out of a mass of wiry black hair. The hairy object then elongated, raising up a pair of dangling, earth-soiled, curve-clawed paws, and exposing a white chest; it gazed in the young tiger's direction in a queer, blind manner, standing nearly erect on stumpy hind legs. Then it dropped, and turned, and the red earth of the termites' nest again began energetically flying between an uncouth pair of hairy black legs. The tiger now withdrew—as it happened, up-wind. As he did so he heard a sudden loud barking "*Wooh-h!*", slunk off sidewise, and something black went grunting savagely close by him, trundling awkwardly through the jungle. That was his first meeting at close quarters with Bhálu, the sloth-bear, vegetarian and hypocrite.

Once more the hot-weather sun, although but a hand's-breadth above the horizon, rose to a terrible heat, and again the creatures of the jungle retired before his blazing face to seek shade and repose.

In the neighbouring ravine were strips of bright green jámun bushes, overhanging nooks paved with damp sand

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and screened by tall grass, but 'twas hot and stuffy down there. The young tiger therefore paced slowly along its banks, pausing at intervals in the slight shade of leafless trees.

The ravine was bordered by terrace-like hillsides clad with harsh dry grass and strewn with the brittle fallen leaves of the teak and other deciduous trees that, gaunt and bare, studded the surrounding slopes like an array of yellow skeletons. Through this parched-up wilderness a tiny path twisted its way slowly uphill. The month of May was nigh, and, on the edge of the terrace above, a spreading, many-rooted banyan tree cast the deep shade of its fresh and sappy blue-green foliage, and was stirred at intervals by a faint breeze. The cub took the upward path, and, as he slowly climbed, his smaller footprints unconsciously overlaid the huge square "pugs" of one who had preceded him earlier that very morning.

At the edge of the little plateau he wound between big slabs of piled black basalt, and emerged into the dry breeze, gaping with the heat. He paced gratefully towards the shade. Stepping incautiously on a dry leaf, it broke with a heavy crunch under his forepad—and next instant he was springing away from the tree with a short, startled roar.

Satisfied with the respect which he had so quickly inspired, the big tiger again stretched out at his ease in the shade. The cub watchfully retired to a small tree higher up the hillside, and inhabited its somewhat scanty shadow. In this manner, with an eye ever half open for the striped majesty under the big banyan, he passed that day.

When evening at last left the valley in shadow and the cool zephyrs of dusk began to stir in the river-bed, the weaker denizens of the jungle might have been heard suddenly calling to each other with sharp, warning voices. "Tiger!" they cried. "Danger!" and the call was taken

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INSPIRING RESPECT

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up and passed on rapidly. "Danger!" cackled the brown spur-fowl. "Tiger!" belled the sámbar up the hill, coughed the monkeys, "*tok-tokked*" the peafowl. Not long afterwards the moon's yellow rising disc revealed the big tiger perambulating river-bed or dusty game-path, and behind him followed ever respectfully, but perseveringly, the lonely, homesick cub. Towards midnight the big tiger found a sounder of wild hogs, and secured a juicy sow. Twice or thrice during the remainder of the night he had to leave his "kill" and charge out "woofing" angrily into the moonlight. And so it was that again the cub went wandering on by himself.

From glen to glen he roamed of nights, past jungle hamlets—snuffing disconsolately in the direction of the cattle-pens—along forest roads, over open glades, by the beds of ravines, and "lying-up" in convenient spots when the dawn found him out. Up and down many a jungly *khóra* he travelled, calling, as he went, in a moaning growl for his lost family circle, and pouncing on anything that might allay the increasing pangs of hunger—frogs in the *nullahs*, lizards even among the rocks, or a writhing spitting ichneumon in the dry grass. A porcupine he tried one night, but it left a sharp black and white quill to remain embedded in the muscles of his cheek long after those in his paws had worked their painful way out.

More than ten days had passed in this manner since that eventful night at the pool of the Khári, and starvation now exercised its irresistible compulsion on his wanderings, while his voice changed from querulous moaning to a harsh and grating insistence.

In this condition of straitened circumstances he found himself one hot evening descending a steep, dry water-course. All around were big dark hills, and the rocky way sank to a deep valley below. When he reached its stifling depths the sun had set. The air was still, a curl of thin smoke was rising beyond some distant trees, and

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a native drum was throbbing softly. There was a little Korku village down there—it was Sirisban, and round it the jungle grows almost up to the doors of the few tiny huts.

A soft clacking of rude cattle-bells could now be heard as the village kine approached their home, wending their way in slowly from the daily grazing-grounds. The tiger had silently vanished.

The little mob of hill cattle came slowly into view, herded by a couple of children. They were pacing slowly and sleepily onwards in the yellow afterglow, past the steep bank of the *nullah*, past a depression filled with rank undergrowth and a tangle of dried creepers. All was peaceful, tranquil, and still. The herd passed on. Behind, one of them lingered in the rear. Then he too had just passed the outskirts of the jungle.

Suddenly there was a silent rush, and immediately a furious clatter arose; every tail stuck up affrightedly in air; and in an instant the cattle were stampeding and galloping madly away, leaving the laggard struggling violently with a strange striped object. The herd-boys screamed out, pluckily beating their hollow bamboo cudgels on the ground. Next moment the released bullock, bleeding about the neck and shoulders from a number of deep scratches, went rushing frantically after his fellows towards the village, while something long and low glided away into the shadows whence it had come.

There was a confused uproar and shouting round the cattle-pens for some time after this; but the night soon fell swiftly dark, and the disturbance gradually came to an end.

The young tiger's timidity had been but temporary, and this repulse only left his appetite whetted to a yet keener edge. He crept out from his covert and furtively approached the village in the dark. Long he sat there, at a little distance, his chest a faint whitish patch in the

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shadows, and watched the twinkling village fires. Then the Korkus' evening meal was completed, the fires died down, silence reigned supreme; and as he began to prowl round close to the huts, his questing voice rose incontinently on the night air—

"*Aūngh-hă! Aūngh-hă! Aūngh-hă!*" repeated six or seven times consecutively, and followed by silence for some minutes before the deep call again grated forth.

In the village somebody yelled, and waved a firebrand; but the disappointed tiger continued his famished perambulations undeterred, and the watcher fell asleep.

In the jungle immediately west of Sirisban the stony ravine curves round under mossy old wide-branching mango trees, and here is the rude village well. As the young tiger approached this spot on his hungry prowl he suddenly halted, and slowly sank down—apparently into the very ground. In that dark glade the keenest human eye would have distinguished nothing—save perhaps an indefinite suggestion of something vaguely white, but the tiger's acute senses had at once acquainted him with the surprising but delightful fact that a white heifer—no doubt overlooked in the confusion that evening and now playing truant—was standing there under the trees by the little pathway. Some rocks and a low bank separated him from the little cow; and, crouching very slowly, he now lay flattened out on his belly, intently contemplating his prospective meal. The heifer stood on, unconscious of any impending harm.

At last a paw of the stalker went out, with infinite caution; and remained there. Very slowly indeed another followed and passed it. And thus, inch by inch, paw by paw, each advanced in turn with almost inconceivable stealth, a grey shadow, a mere suggestion of shape, began to creep along under the tiny bank. So slowly did it travel, this phantom form only a few inches in height, that it was only after long intervals of time that it seemed to

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have moved a little nearer. Under such conditions of extreme and breathless tension time appears to stand still.

If the heifer had made the slightest movement, her creeping foe would have rushed on her instantly; but the foolish creature seemed to be wrapped in a silly, sleepy unconsciousness, perversely happy, perchance, in her successful evasion of the cattle-pen's restraints.

Nearly half an hour must have passed thus, without a suspicion of the faintest sound or stir in the stillness of night, but now at last, within a few feet of the doomed cow, there might have been perceived a minute twitching movement, a movement barely discernible in the very faint light reflected from the starlit sky outside. This was the extreme tip of a round, thick tail curving from side to side in small spasmodic twists. And now, vaguely attracted by this strange motion, but without any change in her attitude of foolish rumination, the petrified heifer gradually realised that she was staring with distended eyeballs and wide-blown nostrils at something altogether frightful that lay at her very feet. Instantaneously deprived of all power of movement, of volition, the wretched little animal remained rooted to the spot, sweating with a clammy fear. Her senses seem to have been frozen by the mesmeric power that held her glued there—that extraordinary expression lent to the mask of a tiger engaged in stalking his prey, by virtue of the peculiar glaring white eye-spaces, with their frowning black angular markings, topped by a strange, intent black-barred forehead. Behind the paralysing stare of this appalling headpiece the lithe and muscular frame was gathered up like the most powerfully compressed steel spring, ready and itching to "take off" from the ground in its first sudden rush.

Thus did the two actors in this grim drama remain suspended, immobile, almost inanimate, in their respective

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poses—the smooth, white, shining skin of the little heifer faintly luminous in the dark of the trees, the horrible shadowy shape of her destroyer pressed close against the stones of the dim watercourse.

Every influence of the hour and place lent an increased paralysis to the sensation of terrible danger. An owl had now begun groaning mournfully in the forest beyond; and the feeble chirping of crickets and tree-frogs made the silence yet more horribly expectant.

After a very long time there was another movement in that dark place—it was the heifer protruding her damp and helplessly fascinated nose, as she stretched it slowly downwards and outwards in the direction of that awful "something."

In that one instant the tension snapped.

A shadowy mass rose at once, seizing her by the throat and over the nape of the neck, and forthwith a fearful struggle set in amid the furious rattlings and rollings of stones.

The tiger, it must be remembered, was young and inexperienced; this was his first independent attempt at procuring his own food; and the cow, though little more than half-grown, was possessed of frantic strength born of the active terror which had succeeded her paralysis of fear. So both seizer and seized continued to battle violently together.

In the course of the struggle the tiger's jaws had been suddenly and dexterously shifted from under the throat to the nape of the heifer's slim neck; his rigidly protruded claws were deeply fixed—one forepaw over her shoulder, the other on her face—and his efforts seemed to be directed towards suddenly bending her head inwards and upwards. In this ghastly embrace the pair heaved and swung, now here, now there, with short, rapid, panting rushes. Then, as the cow, frantically struggling, succeeded in rearing her head and neck momentarily upwards, her murderer, with

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bent back and swiftly clambering hind feet, ripped and scored long, deep gashes down her stiffly protruded fore-legs. Down she came again; and a tremulous moan of despair began to well from her straining throat.

At last there was a heavy squelch, as the miserable creature gave way and fell on her side. As she rolled over, the tiger slightly relaxed his hold. Up she sprang again, and went staggering off, tail in air. But, poor beast, she had not gone far before her hind legs were struck violently from under her, and she was once more in that merciless grip. This time the maddened tiger exerted all his strength. Almost at once there came a dull, thick, creaking snap and a stifled groan! There followed another heavy fall in the darkness; the sound of feeble kicking; a few deep, convulsive breaths; and a slow expiring sigh. Then absolute, dreadful silence! . . .

Long after this was heard a queer, low sound as of bubbling, frothy breathing, and a ripping, tearing noise. Then it ceased, and a deep, throaty purr vibrated. The tiger was now wandering round and smelling his "kill" in the dark. In course of time a dragging sound ensued, and stones rattled. He was endeavouring to convey his prey to a distance, after the instincts of his race.

All night long the young tiger fed voraciously. Beginning at the soft portions between the hinder limbs, he ate steadily forwards, gradually demolishing almost all of both hind quarters. But not yet had he attained to the scientific butchery of his kind; and the carcase remained uncleaned.

A thin sickle moon appeared over the eastward mountains towards morning, and the tiger began to drag the remains of his "kill" yet further into the jungle, with a view to concealing it against his return next night. As he was transporting it along a steep incline it escaped from his hold and rolled down to the bottom of a ravine. He followed, and ate a little more; then, as day began to

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A GHASTLY EMBRACE.

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break, instinctively covered up the gory carcase with leaves and grass, scratching them together like a great cat. Water was his next consideration; and, after that, a siesta in some cool nook. As the sun rose he might have been seen near a pool farther down the *nullah*, reaching up and deeply scoring down the soft white bark of a *taklai* tree with lazy, luxurious claws; then he climbed the hillside slowly, contentedly. He had fed and drunk his fill. As he passed under the fallen stems of some long reed-grass they tickled his back, and up went his round tail after the pleasurable fashion of all cats. He passed on upwards, a handsome, sleek young murderer, seeking a shady spot for the day, and wearing an appearance of mild benignity very much at variance with his horrible work of the night. But all Nature is cruel, and tigers too must live; poor brute! he had only fulfilled his mission after all.

Having killed early in the night, and being satiated with much meat, it was late next evening before he descended to make a second meal of his cow; but meanwhile the villagers had traced and removed its remains. He did not prowl very far during the next few lazy nights.

The young tiger now rapidly left his cubdom behind. He could kill for himself, provided that the beast he found was not too big and strong for him; and the longings for mother and the old life soon passed away. He struck out an independent career, and each day brought some fresh and useful experience.

Not many weeks after this the blazing hot weather came to an end. For many days past the jungle had been decking itself in fresh green leafage, preparing thus for the advent of the annual rains, whose tropical excess, had it been loosed on a leafless forest, would soon have washed the hillsides into a rocky, barren desert; and daily thunderstorms, precursors of the approaching south-west monsoon, had brought a heavy stillness to the

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atmosphere, with that delightful scent of bare earth suddenly rain-soaked after long periods of parching drought.

The long, dry yellow grass, beaten down and matted together, now gave out a pleasant damp perfume, and the rain-soaked leaves had ceased to crackle brittlely under foot. Then one morning broke with low trailing clouds pushed in long procession before a moist west wind; and by evening, to a grand accompaniment of thunder and lightning, the "rains" had set in. Night and day the heavy rain swept the hills, soaked up so rapidly here by the thirsty earth that a couple of days passed ere the watercourses began to fill.

Then the first burst of the monsoon slackened, and through intervals in the bulging masses of fat wet cloud the sun shone down again. A light green tint on all the more open ground now showed that the grass had already responded to the welcome moisture; but nearly a month of rain is necessary to bring it up through the withered carpeting of last year's growth. Once through, it shoots up rapidly to a great height, reaching in places to well over the head of a mounted man.

This was the time of a sudden hurried growth of mushrooms and tree-orchids, with legions of flying insect-life, swarming winged termites, and fat vociferous frogs. Then the clouds closed up and shut down once more. Again the tropical downpours smote and drenched the fog-enveloped hills, which now sent down raging freshets of turbid red flood-water under the big rain-streaming leaves of the teak forests. Everywhere the thick drifting mists, the cold settled wind, and dark excessive wet. After a week or so the heavy driving rainfall gave place to a calmer drizzle, the clouds rolled up in fantastic wreaths of curling white vapour, revealing the far-stretching ranges of the rugged Melghât clad in a fresh garb of gorgeous greens and blues, and another "break" ensued, marked by sudden heavy showers.

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By this time every little *nullah* murmured with a clear running stream, all the soft earth fast bound again with grasses, mosses, and a multitude of creeping plants. The forests that had presented such a brittle, bare appearance so short a while since were now matted together again with a rapidly choking growth of tropical exuberance. In every valley and dell the young grass formed a thick velvety sward, and through the friable earth, "forced," as it were, by the extraordinarily warm, moist, hothouse-like atmosphere, came quickly pushing up a numberless variety of ground-orchids, wild lilies of every hue, and wonderful ferns both small and great. The hillsides were clothed in maidenhair, and in the damp breeze that fanned the cliffs wild plantains flapped their green and leathery fronds. Wild life of all descriptions was abroad during the day, and the cuckoo's voice completed the sensation of spring.

It was July; and from this season onwards, until the cold weather sets in four months later on, the tiger becomes even more destructive than usual. The dense-grown jungle precludes all view beyond a few short yards, even the open glades are secret with long green grass, and the clearly impressed plaster-like casts which his heavy pads leave everywhere in the soft mud and clay only exasperate by their mocking witness of his confident proximity. Noiseless, invisible indeed as he was during the time of dry leaves and snapping twigs, he is now an unseen, unheard, unexpected death, a terror in the abstract. The wind in the leaves, the patter of the raindrops, the waving and soughing of the long wet grass, all more than counterbalance the strong contrast which his red coat now makes with the jungle that is so green. The first intimation of his presence is his deadly clutch or paralysing rush from within a few paces; and every creature on which he preys falls an easy, helpless victim.

Our tiger therefore fared sumptuously during the period

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of the monsoon rains. Food was plentiful and easily obtained—herds of cattle were driven to pasture in his very haunts—climate was pleasant; caves and overhanging banks afforded shelter from the rain and insect pests. Meanwhile his coat grew darker red and purer white, and assumed a closer texture. And when November began to lend its chill snap to the air he was in full rich coat—a perfect picture of lithe young beauty. His clear tawny hide shone with high condition, and was banded with glossiest jet. His young teeth gleamed sharp and white in their setting of healthy red. And the snowy white of ruff, chin, eye-spaces, and under parts set off an already extremely handsome *tout ensemble.*

It would not be difficult to paint in the life story of our tiger in ultra-lurid tints—to make him into a dreaded man-eater, a ravening monster, the terror of a countryside—nor to lead him through a hideous career of crime to the most thrilling and gory climax; and this indeed without in the least drawing on imagination, for such things are often too literally true. But they are the exception; and in these chronicles, which are based on the writer's own personal experience, for most of which he vouches as an actual eye-witness, and which aim rather at portraying the ordinary everyday habits and incidental life of the jungle-king—usually one of retirement and inoffensive monotony—they have no place.

Of the tiger's life in his native wilds we have already had glimpses sufficient to carry us in imagination over the years of his youth and through the regularly succeeding seasons of the Indian year, up to the period of his prime. The life of the jungle and its denizens runs its course full of incident and colour, tragedy and romance, it is true; but with the ever-recurring refrain of unalterable savage Nature. And that of the tiger is no exception. He follows the seasons—hot, cold, and wet—wandering on lengthy rounds or tied to locality at their

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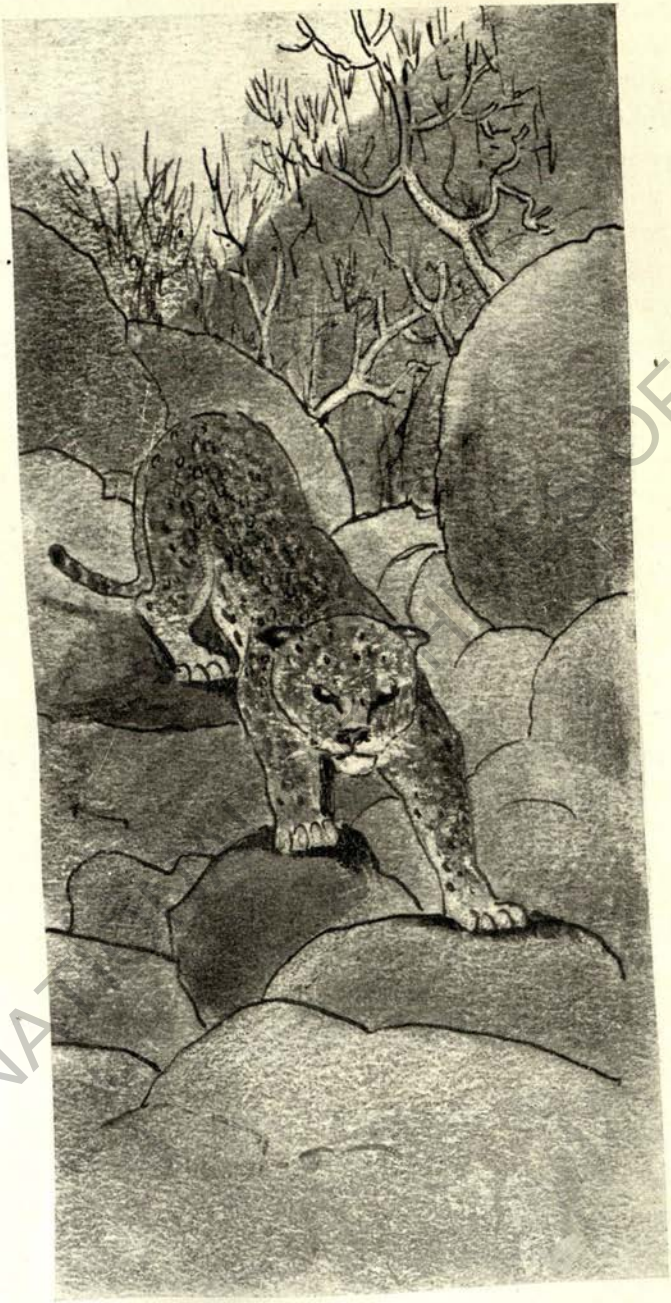

THE LEOPARD

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bidding. He goes hungry or luxuriates in easy circumstances at the nod of Fate.

In the Melghât there were no spotted deer—the tiger's favourite dish—but sámbar and hog abounded, and these formed the *pièce-de-résistance* of his large and varied menu. In the more retired parts of his domain—great tracts of hill jungle far removed from the presence of man—there still roamed in herds the mighty bison; and if indeed the formidable mountain bull himself defied any but the largest and hungriest tiger, there was often a calf or a young cow to be picked up when straggling from the herd.

Towards the more open jungles bordering on the cultivated lowlands he found the *nílgæ*—provider of a satisfying and bulky meal—and here he sometimes met his cousin the leopard.

Thus some five years rolled by, and the tiger attained to the full size and strength of his magnificent prime.

Already had he fought for the possession of his young tigress—a ghastly strife; waged through a long moonlight night, and striking the affrighted jungle dumb with its fearful pandemonium of moaning, groaning, and sudden terrific roars. His wanderings had in their time led him over hundreds of miles to distant jungles. Now he had once more found his way back to the haunts of his youth, and become one of the recognised features of its solitudes.

His headquarters were situated on the line of the same old jungly Sípna, but his regular beat extended over many long miles of the neighbouring hills and glens; and in days of parching hot weather he would temporarily shift his quarters to the higher ranges.

A tiger of the heavy, continuous, well-watered forests, his was the life of a great wanderer, a beast now here, now there, and thereby almost immune from the dangers which threaten felines inhabiting less favoured localities and restricted to certain well-known coverts.

Yet had dangerous experience not entirely passed him

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by: by reason of which he too had grown cunning and suspicious, never now returning to his "kill" without much cautious circumambulation.

On this wise had it fallen out, that, killing a grazier's full-grown milch buffalo one foggy afternoon on the grassy uplands of Khámla, he had dragged and left the huge bulk of his prey within the border of a leafy copse, and descended to the stream below, with the intention of returning at dusk.

In the long, rank grass under the close-set trees lay the mighty carcase of the great milker, her short, thick uppermost limbs projecting stiff in air, her shoulders torn and lacerated, and her powerful neck twisted under her and pierced with four great red, gaping punctures. Of what avail even her ponderous strength, her ugly, sharp, raking horns, when pitted against the prowess of so formidable an opponent! True, she had faced him bravely, and thrown him off, snarling, twice; but what should that count against a muscular strength that later, half lifting, half dragging, had been able to transport her huge weight over more than a hundred yards of soft ploughed fields—and that as easily as some poaching cat might drag away a captured hare!

Neatly, too, had the destroyer's work been done—butchery, skilful and scientific. The great carcase had been carefully disembowelled, the offal deposited in a place by itself and apart, and covered up with grass and leaves; while the flesh, sweet and succulent, had been dragged to a convenient spot further on, and there left to await its destroyer's return.

Until that day the tiger, whether his quarry were jungle beasts or domestic cattle, had invariably returned to partake of his meal in undisturbed peace. But on this occasion it was different. Not for nothing had the scene of carnage been witnessed by a small boy, and the aid of the village *shikári* invoked.

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SHE HAD FACED HIM BRAVELY

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Evening fell, and the slayer came up from the valley. Confidently he came, without concealment, and as one accustomed to no interference, fearing naught, The dewy bushes parted; he paced heavily forward, to pass all unconsciously right under an unnatural-looking clump of leaves in the limbs of a low tree. From this hiding-place the long, lean muzzle of a native gun then slowly protruded, and followed him as he moved onwards to the "kill," and stooped to smell it. Long dwelt the careful aim—steadied no doubt by the muttered prayer to patron saint or jungle godling. Then a thunderous discharge shook the air, and the rude charge of hammered slugs sped on its fortuitous way. A nerve-shattering roar; a spring beyond the sulphurous pall of country gunpowder; and, with two of the slugs embedded in his mighty shoulder, the tiger galloped away—to limp and starve through many a long subsequent day.

An indirect result of this wound was our tiger's one temporary lapse from the paths of rectitude; for 'twas in the resultant convalescence and its hungry straits that he fell one early morning, along a forest road, on a crawling bullock-cart. But the cattle suddenly swerved, and he found himself clutching an object wrapped in a dark blanket, which gasped and screamed, and died quite suddenly, and weakly, in a surprising manner. He carried the thing off uphill, but had scarcely begun, guiltily and hesitatingly, to lick the strange-tasting blood, before a band of similarly shrieking bipeds made him relinquish his strange prey and slink away with some unknowing fear that thenceforward held him guiltless of further human blood.

Nor, while his crippled condition lasted, was his attempt on a big boar any more successful. It was in a dew-soaked glade that they met, where the trailing undergrowth screened a marshy hollow. The smell of an old hog is unmistakably peculiar, and it might have been

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different, perhaps, had the stalker approached from behind; but piggy happened to look up from his busy rooting in the nick of time, and the very uncompromising attitude he instantly struck persuaded his antagonist that pork was too expensive that day.

Across the tiger's path had fallen as yet no shadow of the sportsman; but his rifle-shot had more than once been heard echoing up the glens that bordered the central valley of the jungly Melghât, and in the natural sequence of the wanderings of both it was inevitable that these two should meet.

It happened one cool, cloudy evening that the tiger, issuing abroad earlier than usual from his lair, had been attracted by the movements of a little brown four-horned antelope that was stepping about daintily in the fallen leaves at the side of a forest road; and he had begun to creep stealthily up the bed of a miniature ravine towards the unsuspecting creature. Before he had crawled very far, however, the little animal raised its head to listen a moment, cocked its ears, then, with a few jerky preliminary steps through the long grass, suddenly hopped off into the still forest with a coughing "*Phoo-phoo!*" of alarm. Very soon after this there came a quick, soft thudding of hoofs in the dust of the roadway, and as the tiger shrank back and crouched lower, a horseman turned the corner of a steep bank at a sharp trot. His eyes were following the course taken by the startled antelope, so that their gaze at first passed over that cringing shape in the *nullah;* but as his head turned he started, unconsciously checked his horse, and their eyes momentarily met. Then the horse, who had seen the tiger before his master, snorted and danced sidewise for an instant, and the tiger had vanished. He reappeared for a few seconds, about a hundred paces farther on, glancing back momentarily before passing over a rising ground into the jungle beyond. The man remained seated there, still gazing attentively after him.

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RAISED HIS HEAD

PORK TOO EXPENSIVE

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The very next night it was that the tiger, slowly perambulating the bottom of a wooded ravine on his starlit beat, rounded a bend to find a small dark animal staring at him from the fringe of the trees. As he halted, watchfully, he became aware that it had the enticing smell of a domestic cow—but the sombre hairy skin of a sámbar; and it emitted a feeble squeaking grunt as it faced him, rearing with a little struggle backwards, as if its forefoot were somehow caught, and it could not escape. Filled with deep suspicion, the tiger backed down out of sight. After some time, however, he began very silently and slowly to circle round through the jungle, scenting warily as he went. In course of time he had approached from another quarter with such absolute stealth, that when he caught sight of the strange creature once more, he found that it had lain down contentedly beside a little heap of cut fodder. In the dead silence of that calm starlight it could be heard gently chewing the cud.

This was the tiger's first experience of the sportsman's treacherous hospitality. The creature before him was a bait—a *héla*, or young male domestic buffalo—an unfortunate of a kind generally chosen for this grim work, by reason both of his low price and the fact that the similar use of a cow would, in this land of anomalies, offend the religious susceptibilities of the pious Hindu, and indirectly react to the detriment of the sportsman's movements. The little animal seems quite unconscious of impending harm, as, previously watered, and provided with fodder for the night, he stands there at his picket awaiting his fate; and the sportsman must needs justify this procedure as best he may, calling it the means to an end, and knowing that what befalls the *héla* is usually mercifully unexpected and sudden.

Although our tiger knew his dinner when he saw it, he was as yet ill-versed in these matters of *hélas;* so when the same old grim tragedy was enacted under the cold

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stars, and he began to drag away his prey, he was surprised that it would not accompany him farther than a certain limit—the length of its tether. Therefore, after a few powerful attempts to snap the strange bond, he sat down and made his first meal on the spot. On leaving the carcase at dawn he moved off up the ravine, drank at a waterhole among the rocks, and lay up for the day below a little dry waterfall in a tributary *nullah*, in a cool spot overhung by green bushes.

About half an hour later two natives came very slowly up the bed of the main stream, stooping at intervals, and looking cautiously about them. They halted opposite the mouth of the *nullah* up which the tiger had gone, whispered together a little, gesticulated in silent pantomime, gazed about a little more, and then went quietly away.

Half that day had passed, and the jungle outside the tiger's retreat was shimmering in the full glare of silent midday. The great brute himself lay in the deep shade of the overhanging rock, sprawled out on the dry sand, his eyes mere half-closed slits, the thick forearms stretched out, his mouth half open, and his whole heavy frame panting in the dry heat—when he suddenly checked his breathing, closed his mouth, and seemed to be listening. For a moment he remained thus; then his lower jaw slowly dropped again, the eyes dozed, and the panting recommenced.

A minute or so later he raised his head attentively and listened again. The faint yell of a man had come echoing through the trees to his ears, and some time later there followed a sudden chorus of distant howling and the sound of drumming. A shot was fired—far away. After a while the uproar seemed louder and nearer, and mingled with it came the loud knockings of axes on fallen trees. The tiger was now on his feet. The axes he had heard before; but the other sounds were new of

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their kind, and they had a strange ring of defiance—unlike the ordinary cries of woodcutters which he knew about and understood. With a sense of disquietude he began to walk slowly away. He stood for a while under the steep, dry waterfall; then, with a heavy effort, scrambled up the smooth lime-encrusted rocks, and gained the upper bed of the *nullah*. Every turn of his jungles was familiar to him, and he knew that this water-course led but a short distance uphill. Round the shoulder of the knoll to the left, however, there led a way through the long dry grass and scattered saplings to some thick bamboo coverts bordering the main stream. The noises were drawing nearer; but they did not hinder him from making off in the direction of the bamboo jungle; in fact, they were pushing him unconsciously in the direction in which he most desired to go. So, after standing and looking back over his shoulder for a few moments, the tiger walked quietly away. The jungle was hot. He was gorged, heavy with much hot buffalo meat, and very disinclined to move far. He rounded the slope of a spur, reached the scanty shelter of a small tree, and sank down in its shade.

For a time the noise of the beaters had been muffled by the shoulder of the hill he had turned, and he lay there gaping. But before long the clamour again approached; and once more he was moving on before it.

In front of the tiger lay, indeed, his way to the fresh coverts he sought; but it was now all dry, unshaded grass, crackling hot in the vertical rays of a dazzling sun. He paused irresolutely. To the left hand rose some leafy green trees, towards the bank of the main ravine. He turned and slowly made in their direction. As he approached them, however, there arose a low tapping sound; and as something moved he stopped short and glanced upwards quickly. A jungle man was perched there, high up in the branches; and at that the tiger turned with a

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short, disgusted "*Wough!*" and forthwith entered the undesirable stretch of parching grass.

He was moving quicker now, at a fast walk, with open jaws and lolling tongue. The burning air that rose from the whitened grass almost choked him; the intense sun was playing like molten fire along his back; he was purblind in its quivering glare. Deflected by that "stop" in the tree, he crossed the sun-beaten open at an angle to the course he had originally held. This chance deviation was his salvation that day.

With half-closed eyes he pursued his sullen course. Presently tree-trunks came into sight, the dark line of a shady ravine loomed through the dancing mirage, and he was passing from that awful grass into barer ground, studded with small trees, and carpeted with dry leaves—in which his burning pads made a heedless crashing. Already he enjoyed in anticipation the grateful obscurity of the shady bamboos close ahead. A few paces more, and their cool refuge would close over his scorching hide—when all at once a stunning report cracked in the air above him, and he stumbled forward helplessly on his great nose! In an instant—with the same movement, as it were—he had picked himself up and, uttering a loud guttural grunt, was galloping clumsily away! Dashing incontinently half through a bush, he swerved through the trees, with whirling tail, for a little depression leading down to the jungle below, and in that moment, with another dinning "*crack!*" something struck the ground violently below him and drove up a sharp spurt of pinging splinters. "*Wough!*" he bellowed again. Then he was gone! . . .

That bamboo jungle communicated farther on with a long, deep *khóra;* the wooded course of the latter led gradually up into one of the thickest portions of the surrounding forests two miles away, and in the dense undergrowth of those fastnesses a tiger lay all that afternoon,

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"WOUGH!" HE BELLOWED AGAIN

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with scorched and blistered pads, slowly licking his huge forearm. The spines of his rough tongue had turned back the wet hide, exposing a small red circular mark; on the opposite and inner side of the swollen limb skin and flesh, blown away by the shattering expansion of an "express" bullet, had been licked clean. Towards evening something was heard stepping in the leaves close by, and the wounded tiger laid back his ears with a horrid growl of menace. But 'twas only a couple of harmless spur-fowl pattering about.

That was a bad day for our tiger. Driven forward twice from the friendly shelter he had sought on being hit, and fired at yet once again, he had during his flight narrowly escaped the fatal stroke of a big cobra that lay in his path, its angry puff heard barely in time to spring aside. In the bed of the stream, too, he had seen a gang of his enemies the wild dogs. What if they should follow him in his crippled condition!

* * * * * *

It was a tiger grown remarkably astute that now, recovered of a second wound, haunted the Sípna jungles. He carefully avoided the neighbourhood of man, the vicinity of jungle villages, even, for a while, the jungle roads and pathways. A chance halloo of some bamboo-cutter, and he would sneak off cunningly to distant spots; the sight of a grazing bullock, and his suspicions would be instantly aroused. Meanwhile he lived entirely on game, and confined his peregrinations to the loneliest portions of the hills. The dense forests clothing the lofty ridges of the Ábapúr range became his favourite abode.

But the slow cycle of the year once more ushered in another dry season, the hill springs failed and dried, and in course of time the tiger followed the exodus of the other wild creatures to the lower valleys, where water still lingered in a few rare pools. He still retired to the cool

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solitudes of Ábapúr by day, but his nightly beat was now traced in huge pad-marks along the deep valleys to east and west.

It is not at every point indeed that the girdling scarps of these hills may be passed, and the few precipitous spurs that give access to the lofty plateau are followed by narrow winding pathways—made and used by wild beasts and jungle men. By one or other of these game-paths our tiger would issue on his nightly prowl. Far below the eastern verge of the heavily wooded range in which he now had his home there wound the shingly bed of a deep-sunk mountain torrent, and in this direction one of these hill-paths pierced the mural scarp of black basalt and fell twining through the trees of the jungly hillside. A thousand feet below it led down to the dry bed of the river, at a place marked by a miniature bay of level ground and a rock-bound waterhole. This was "Muing-páti"—"the flat by the *muing* trees"—and of all the neighbouring pools the least distant from the fastnesses of Ábapúr.

It was one balmy evening in May that the tiger rose from his lair on the Ábapúr hills and slowly followed the path that led to distant Muingpáti. The declining sun had already left the eastern slopes in shadow, but, as the great brindled brute silently emerged from the heavy green jungle of his lonely plateau, and paused in the open at the brow of the hill, the stretching mountain ranges beyond the valley were still bathed in its last golden beams.

To the immediate left of the precipitous spur, down which his path now began to twist its way, there yawned a cavernous gulch, falling suddenly to a great depth from the foot of the dark scarps of horizontal basalt that rimmed the tableland above. This huge, dim gully was drained by a boulder-strewn ravine and filled with a choked tangle of thick, dry jungle—bamboo thickets, rotting tree-trunks, fallen masses of rock, long reed-grass,

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and thorny, creeper-knotted undergrowth—that swept far downhill and round the shoulders of the mountain to merge in the heavy grey teak forest of the slopes below. Yet lower and beyond, about a mile down the headlong swoop of spur and gully, portions of the winding course of the stony river-bed could be seen through gaps in the tall jungle, boring their way tortuously between green trees and ravine-scarred steeps to join the Sípna—now far away to the left. Beyond the depths of the dusky valley the jungled hills rose again for close on two thousand feet, rank on rank, spur on spur, ridge beyond ridge in their mighty array, the departing sunlight striking their steep sides and dyeing them a glowing orange, with violet fissures where they shouldered up like buttresses, five miles away, against the opposite plateaux of woody Bejmahal. Thence the curving amphitheatre of purpling hills swept round to the far north, where, towering over the sea of rugged forests at their feet, there stood out, solitary and apart, the flat-topped heights of Mákla and Áséhri. And beyond those gloomy sentinels the undulating lower ranges of the wild Melghât went rolling away into the soft haze of evening that overlay the broad panorama of the Tapti valley, till—sixty, seventy miles distant—they faded into the dim blue hills of Kálibhít. A far-off smudge of trailing smoke marked an extensive forest fire; and some tiny masses of piled cloud, lying low beyond the horizon at an immense distance, shone at intervals with a remote glimmer of lightning. Over the whole desolate scene brooded a deep sensation of vastness and wide-flung space.

As the sun went down the sky became suffused with a flood of lurid yellow light, growing and spreading into orange and crimson in the still warm atmosphere till the summits of the higher hills glowed like heated copper. Against the flaming west the huge bulk of Ábapúr reared up dark and silent. The last crow of the jungle-cock had

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died away, and even the monotonous "*Kotúru—kotúru—kotúru*" of the tireless green barbet had ceased to echo abroad.

At this hushed hour the tiger, descending the hillside, had arrived at the edge of the steep bank overlooking Muingpáti.

Later on the previous evening he had come down as usual to drink and wander in search of food; and it was here that he had found a little *héla* gazing blankly at him once more. It may have been that he had become forgetful, or that his suspicions had been lulled by the absolute solitude of that lonely spot; or he may have confused the little beast with a small herd of sámbar that had stampeded before him in the dark across the pebbly riverbed. At any rate, he had slain the *héla*. It had been tethered to a heavy flood-borne log lying in the bed of the stream, and with difficulty transporting both victim and log, he had dragged his prey close to the little pool. Now the long day's siesta had passed, and he had returned hither from his distant retreat, drawn by returning appetite to the remains of his "kill." He must have known that he had left the carcase in the open exposed to the vultures; yet at variance with his usual habits, he sought it again. Perhaps the thirst engendered by that heavy meal of hot flesh may have persuaded him. Even tigers make mistakes.

A tiger ordinarily divides his meal into two portions, and consumes them on consecutive nights. He very rarely feeds by day, or even by daylight, save in exceptional circumstances. Since he nearly always kills during the night, he has sufficient time to make a good meal on the spot; and on the approach of dawn he usually conceals the remains, drinks if possible, and retires to such a distance as local requirements dictate, where he digests his meal in sleep throughout the day. Next evening he returns—or intends to return—to make

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his second repast, and approaches the spot where he knows he can find it. But his actual return to the remains of his "kill" depends on many circumstances. He may find and kill some other animal *en route;* he may meet or smell human beings on his way or when approaching his "kill"; the "kill" itself may have been touched or its position shifted by man, or he may be merely capricious. Anything may serve to prevent his return, especially if a cunning, knowing brute. Usually he approaches—as all the cats do—in absolute silence, and seating himself, contemplates the scene for a long time ere creeping in to feed; or he may first stealthily perambulate the surrounding jungle.

There is a popular idea that tigers eat carrion, but it is only in extremely rare instances that they return to their "kills" a third time. Thus two nights the tiger dines—the first a hot meal, the second a cold. For "hash" he does not care. On such habits are the sportsman's methods based.

So it was that evening in the fading glow of twilight that a startled spurfowl rose cackling from the leaves uphill, and a troop of loose-limbed monkeys cantered hurriedly across the boulders of Muingpáti and up their sheltering trees beyond.

Something seemed to be moving stealthily in the jungle overlooking the pool. There was a faint rustle on the brow of the slope where the long red grass ran into the shadow of the close-set trees—and the sound of a dry leaf crushing slowly, as if under the pressure of a soft but heavy footfall.

Down in the grey obscurity of the little river-bed the half-eaten cadaver of the little buffalo made a dark blot on the whitish stones and shingle. Beyond it rose the low croaking of frogs; and a deep hum of bees as they mounted in a steady succession from the margin of the hidden waterhole after drinking, and droned away through

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the still air. Night was falling. Already a star or two began to show in the darkening sky; and the mournful call of some nocturnal bird re-echoed hollowly in a neighbouring ravine.

After a while a stick snapped indistinctly across the narrow glade, and there was a slight crepitation in the opacity of the opposite trees. In the dim light a shapeless form, as of some large beast, travelled slowly across an opening in the brittle undergrowth and faded into the shadows beyond a fallen log.

For some minutes there was dead silence. Then a cautious tread again became faintly audible in the loose carpeting of withered leaves; some grass-stems bent very slowly aside; and, with infinite craft, the brindled shape of a large tiger stole softly, slily, out of the gloom. He was creeping watchfully forward, paw by paw, head down. Then he stopped short in the middle of a pace, and listened.

Some small crepuscular creature—a mungoose, or a ratel—was stirring in the dead leaves along the hillside to his right. He remained motionless for a few moments, gazing intently in this direction, full of deep suspicion. Then he slowly advanced his huge suspended paw, and came on once more through the jungle, with a heavy-shouldered padding gait; a great, ugly, bloated brute, clumsy and misshapen in his enormous tawny strength.

To reach the bed of the stream—and the motionless flyblown thing that lay there—he would have to pass a little thicket, and then turn down the warm shelving rocks of the river-bank itself. Deliberately, warily, he paced on. He passed behind the make of interlacing branches. His fulvous hide could be seen moving gradually through their interstices. Inch by inch he reappeared. A great head emerged, then the white chest. And then he sank slowly on his haunches and calmly sat down!

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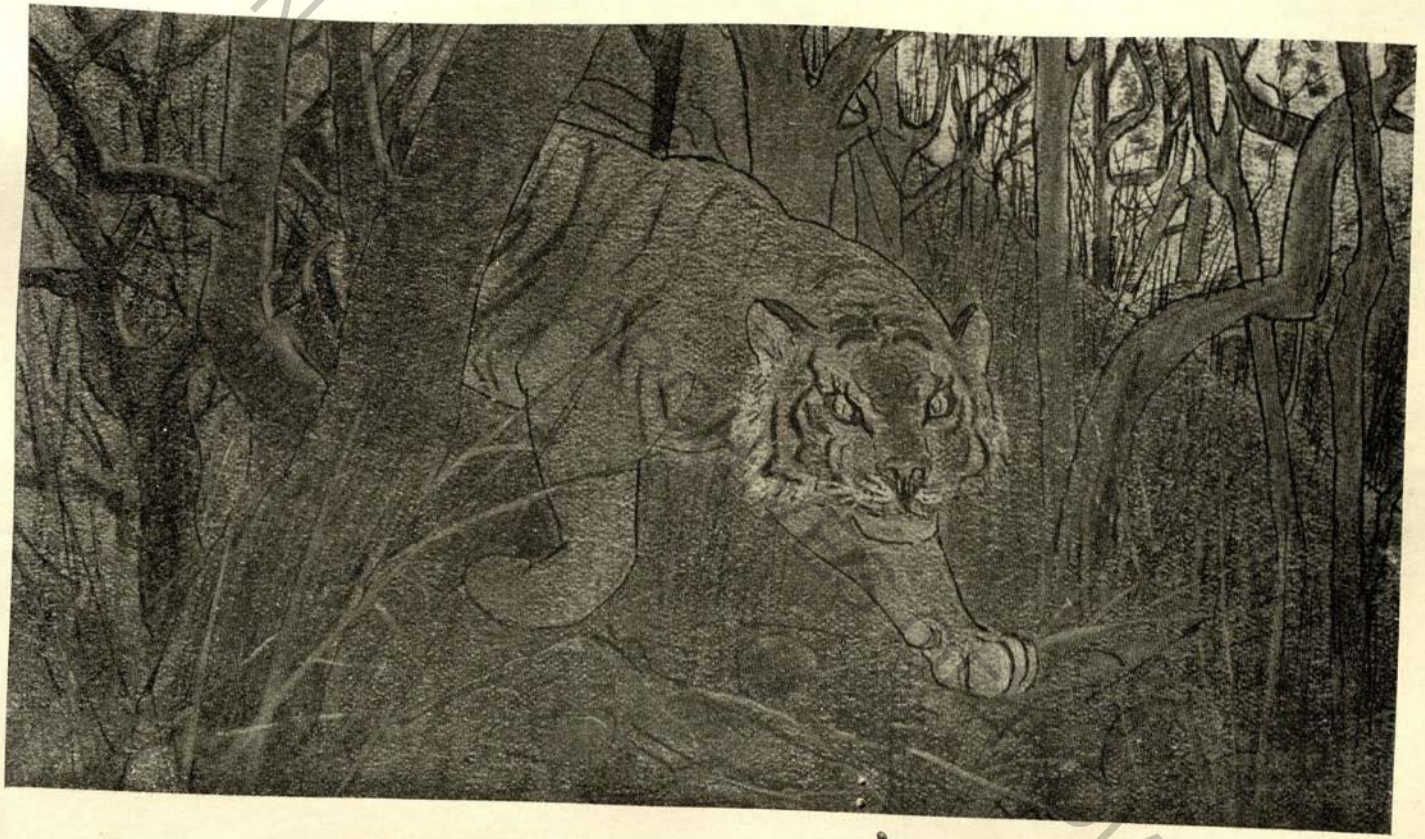

STOLE SOFTLY, SLILY OUT

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Across the river something creaked gently in a tree, with the faint sound of wood on wood.

The tiger swiftly raised his yellow orbs and stared. Then the mungoose began to rustle in the leaves again, and he turned his head slowly in that direction. Anon his gaze returned to the watercourse before him.

Circumspect, watchful, alert—for all his heavy looks—he sat there and contemplatively waited—a shadowy, round, be-whiskered countenance, pale chest-front, and one indistinctly huge shoulder.

Darkness was rapidly closing in. What waning moon there was would not rise till close on midnight. Yet he made no sign of moving!

High up the sides of the sunken valley the night breeze began to sough desolately in the leafless teak forests. The sunset glow had now faded into a luminous hyalescence that reflected its last pale twilight over the jungle, and the eerie cry of the great horned owl thrilled quiveringly from the gloomy trees beyond the pool—

"Ku-*whirr*-ir-r-oo! Ku-*whirr*-ir-r-oo!"

The distant breeze had slowly died away, and there was not a breath of air. Across the dark blue zenith a hawk-bat could be heard whirling swiftly with a flutter of winnowing wings. In the dim watercourse the faint "*zip . . . zip . . . zip*" of *cicadæ* emphasised the feeling of empty desertion and solitude.

All this time the grisly watcher under the trees had sat motionless, but now, at last, a shadowy bulk was creeping from the bank on to the sloping rocks.

In the stillness there came a tiny metallic sound—a kind of soft click.

The creeping shadow stopped. A pair of baleful, greenish, shining eyes were fixed inquiringly on a tree across the belt of dry shingle.

Suddenly a flash of red sparks cracked out stunningly. Bang!—*wough-h—wough!* . . .

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As the thud of the shot regurgitated from the echoing hills there was a crash in the undergrowth. Presently the brooding silence returned; and far down the winding glen rose the distant cry of a startled plover.

* * * * * *

Many years had come and gone since that night in the valley under old Ábapúr, when the tiger, after having been so narrowly missed, had, in no sweet frame of mind, hurried for a couple of miles down the dry bed of the mountain river to the Ámbadóh pool, met a tigress accompanied by two big cubs, found five young buffaloes that had been driven there to water and left alone and loose in that dark jungle by the sportman's erring employees, and joined in the savage chase that ensued. Of those five *hélas* only one had escaped untouched; the rest had been skilfully herded up into a secluded ravine, and there wantonly butchered, three of the wretched animals being pulled down within the radius of a few yards. Next morning four tigers had been seen leaving a neighbouring waterhole at dawn; they were playing ponderously together, clawing down the stem of a soft-barked tree, and then slowly ascending the hillside. But then they had cunningly separated, nor did one of them return next night to the scene of carnage.

As for the tiger of our story, he had for a long while disappeared from the jungles of the Melghât, and those long years had taught him much wile.

One terrible day was there marked deep on his memory, when, in the distant Central Provinces, he had been tracked and located in a most unfavourable position by a party of his worst enemies—the ubiquitous *sahibs*. It is true that he never took another bait after his experiences at Muingpáti, nor returned a second time to any "kill" save those of deer or pig; but on this one occasion his craft had overreached itself, and he had been imposed on by a

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stratagem. Three baits had been tethered together, as in a herd, and at last he had been induced to kill and lie up close by. In the long day's hunting that ensued there had been a series of formidable encounters, during which a foolishly disobedient beater had been clawed from a low tree and killed, and one of the sportsmen fatally mauled; while he himself, sorely crippled, bedraggled, and spent, had only made good his escape under the opportune approach of dusk.

Terrible straits were those to which he had been subsequently reduced—long days of misery and emaciation—but, with his usual luck, he had in time managed to make a wonderful recovery from wounds such as almost invariably prove fatal in the case of the hot-blooded feline; and once more ranged the jungle.

From that time forward, however, he went with a slight limp, and his right fore pad left a three-toed impress, a peculiarity so unmistakable that when now, in his old age, he had returned to the jungles that knew him so well, it had gained for him the sobriquet of the "Lame Tiger"—Old "Lungra" of the Sípna.

And now for years had Lungra lived in peace down the old river-bed with its dense surrounding woodland. With the waning of his youthful agility he had found it more comfortable to lead the life of a cattle-lifter than to subsist on the fleet and wary game of the forests alone; yet with such marvellous acumen did he ply his trade that he was never to be caught napping. He seemed to be guided by some uncanny intuition that guarded him from every harm; and many were the tales of his sagacious cunning that went the round of the village fires. In course of time weird myths came to be woven around the personality of the old tiger, and these gradually resulted in his being invested with supernatural powers by the superstitious demon-ridden aborigines of his native wilds, who now regarded his depredations in the light of sacrifices to the

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jungle deities. The fact was that old Lungra permitted no other tiger within many miles of his own range, and had established himself as the subsidised custodian of the neighbouring forests, levying blackmail in the shape of an occasional cow or bullock as tribute for his services. Now and then—when he felt that he was becoming too much of a burden on his people of the Sípna, said the Korkus—he would leave his headquarters for a while, and the well-known track of his three toes would go limping round on a tour of fifty or sixty miles ere returning. A tiger will travel by road or pathway whenever he can, and the dust of the forest roads registered the impression of his great sign-manual with unfailing certainty, and were the means of checking the interesting regularity of his wanderings abroad.

And wherever he went he fared well. As to his taking a calf here, a heifer there, in his kindly discriminating way, why, they were his—it was "only old Lungra"—and the cachinnations of the jungle people waxed ever louder as they exaggerated the wondrous feats of their tawny demi-god. Two bullocks yoked together would be returning in the evening from the plough—a sudden rush in the long grass, and, madly galloping, they would disappear in the adjoining forest, where one would go down and be eaten while the other remained untouched, a terrified spectator of the gory scene. That was Lungra! Some unpopular timber agent would come to the valley and strike hard bargains with the Korkus—his bullocks would suddenly vanish! Good old Lungra! At long intervals a *sahib* would arrive and hopefully tie up half a dozen tempting *hélas*. Not one would be touched, though the three-toed track would be seen all round—but some fine morning his pony would be found half-eaten not a hundred paces from camp, whence it had been silently seized and dragged during the night! Lungra again!

As for shooting him—he, the vehicle of the jungle gods,

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A DRINK

REPULSIVE SCAVENGERS

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the chosen steed for two wild nights in the year of the dread Bhónwardéo!—why, it was absurd! He was invulnerable; and the bullets would drop harmless from his hide! Thus hinted the grinning jungle-folk, who had not the least objection to accepting the sportsman's rupees for their services as beaters, but who would quietly open out as they drove the jungle, so that their old patron, if by any chance he should be there—which was not very likely—might have no difficulty in passing to safety through the gap in their line.

Thus flourished old Lungra of the Sípna; while his fame spread abroad, and it seemed that his long reign would only end when he should choose to slip from mortal ken in the mysterious fashion of tigers that die in the natural course of a green old age, and so departing, leave no trace behind.

And yet what miserable fate was this to choose for so magnificent a brute!—to be hounded in his last tottering weakness to a shameful end by some rapacious pack of wild dogs!—to furnish a midnight rendezvous for the fiendish, carrion-scenting hilarities of a chorus of yelling jackals!—to drag himself away to die in some lone cave, and be discovered and gloated over by the cowardly striped hyænas limping lickerishly round; and then, when all was over, to be ghoulishly dismembered and scattered through the jungles in the hideous orgies peculiar to these repulsive scavengers!

So, lucky to the last, Fate spared him such indignities.

In his dotage and the overweening confidence of a life-long experience the old tiger at last committed a fatal error. He developed a dangerously regular habit—and took to nightly perambulating the old forest road, the cart-track that runs through the centre of the Sípna valley, crossing and recrossing the shingly river-bed that, shouldered now right now left by the steep banks against which it impinges in its serpentine course, sweeps from

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side to side of the woody dale. Through long yellow grass and thick jungle the narrow track runs, deep in soft sand or powdery dust, and on this ready medium could be clearly traced the nocturnal rounds of the three-toed tiger as he passed up or down the valley on his senile beat.

Once more it was the open season, in a year marked by a scanty rainfall; the jungles lay stripped of their malarious verdure, and a hot March sun had been licking up the last of the shallower pools. On the hillsides around the naked teak forest was once more littered with its dry resounding leaves, and the old level river-bottom, arched by great drooping trees, and bosky with rolling woods now golden-brown and bronze in the autumnal tints of their searing foliage, lay bathed in the ruddy evening light.

No *héla* lowed at his picket in the surrounding woodland, no "beat" disturbed its solitude. Yet a sportsman had come to the valley again; and, with his native tracker, had spent three or four days in quietly examining the neighbourhood, and piecing together the story told by the nocturnal tracks on the old road.

And now in the warm languor of the sunset hour there are low voices in the quiet jungle.

Here and there along the deserted cart-track huge old trees raise their branching arms and rounded foliage amid the more leafless woods, casting deep shade by day or under moon, and beneath one of these—a great knotty oak-shaped mango that rears its gnarled trunk from the roadside grass—stand the tracker and a couple of jungle men. Their eyes are raised to the thick leafage which, some fifteen feet above their heads, clothes a sturdy limb that, forking horizontally into a maze of twisting branches, projects and droops across the forest road. Then the rustling leafage is parted for a moment by a hidden hand, the voices cease, the figures on the roadway salaaming turn and go away. Some fifty yards farther on they halt,

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and, gathering great crisp fallen leaves of teak, strew them carefully in a broad band across the little road. Then, passing on, they disappear round a distant bend; and the jungle lies still and deserted.

Now the last long fingers of the sinking sun have withdrawn. The westerly sky is painted with fiery hues, and, through the close-set saplings, glows like a furnace behind its red-hot bars.'

Low, opposite the ardent west, hangs the golden sphere of the full moon, slowly paling into silver as she mounts over the dusky hills beyond the valley.

The gradually cooling air is laden with the strong sweet scent of the sickly *mhowa* flowers that, ripened, drip steadily into the fallen leaves from their leafless trees around. The latest sounds of day have departed, the peafowl have roosted with their sad wild cries, and night has fallen—swift, still, complete, after the abrupt fashion of the tropics.

And already the jungle is rustling with the movements of nocturnal creatures, small and great. The nightjars are tapping out their long succession of monotonous notes or sailing abroad like shadows through the balmy air; a tiny screech-owl chuckles diabolically in the gathering gloom; a flying squirrel poises from a slender tree-top, black against the sky, then, launching out, goes swooping across a dim glade.

Emerging from the sable shadow of the old mango tree the jungle road runs onward to the next bend through long swathes of dry reed-grass. To the right the forest is dense and dark; but through an opening in the bare-twigged saplings to the left the little valley is seen lying pale under the wan moonlight—pale, with stretches of grassland, sombre with indistinct belts of jungle and copse, the black tree-bordered line of the Sípna beyond, and bounded by the blue-grey hills that, spiky and rough with the strange naked growth of the teak forest, slope

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down in dim succession on either side. Above all hangs the dark blue vault of night—ablaze with glittering stars.

There is a gentle stir of the grass, and a little hesitating figure is standing in the silent roadway. Then it steals tripping delicately across, enters the dim jungle, and a faint crepitation in the leaves marks its slow retreat. Presently the harsh bark of a *khákar* resounds through the echoing woods.

The grass swishes again; some dark half-hidden objects can be seen at intervals as they approach through its crackling stems. Shortly there is a snuffing and a low grunt, and a number of black forms pass trotting across the track. It is a sounder of hogs. Behind them emerges a bulky shape of indistinct grey, and stands motionless, casting a truculent inky shadow on the white dust of the moonlit road—the old boar!

Then these, too, have gone; their footsteps die away in the distant crushing leaves; and the valley is once more left to its moonlit *mhowa*-scented silence.

Hark!—What was that?—Far down the river-bed rings the faint echo of a sudden note!—the trumpeting bell of a sámbar! *"Pónk!"*

* * * * * *

The moon that rises over Sípna's banks this evening throws long shadows in the neighbouring glen of the Kili, and reveals an indistinct bulk creeping quietly along a jungle path. Presently this object turns a bamboo-clump, the low rays faintly illuminate a great striped head and heavy fulvous forearm, and a tiger is standing there, gazing up the hillside.

Then he begins to slowly climb the slanting pathway. It is but a few minutes since he left his lair in a deep ravine of the mazy hill behind. His coat is bleached with long years; his teeth worn and yellow; his once rich markings faded to a dullish brown. But the eye is as

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watchful as of yore; and the heavy limbs, if not so lithely active, are full of reserved power. As he paces grimly forward one of the huge forepaws so softly padding in the warm dust leaves a three-toed track. It is old Lungra!

Now he has reached the crest of the low hill, and paces the level to its brow overlooking the old valley. There, below the teak-clad moonlit hills, curves his river-bed, winding out to the west between its dark groves of trees. And there in the distance shines a rosy star of flame. That is Kolkáz. The old forest hut is occupied, then.

A damp air rises from the valley below, where the course of the river turns in under this steep spur—there is a long, shallow pool down there, beloved of pig and deer; already a faint rustling sounds below, and the "*Tit-tit-tit*" of the yellow-wattled plover marks the approach of some beast to water.

Not long after this there is a slight rattle of loose earth, and the old tiger springs heavily down into the soft bed of a tributary *nullah*. An overhanging tree, a walk along this deep-cut watercourse, a break in the sheer bank, a scramble, and now he is silently promenading the edge of the Sípna itself. Little paths run here and there through dry reeds and brushwood. Dried leaves crackle on the pathway. Something small darts suddenly snarling into long grass. It is very dark under the fringe of overhanging trees; there is the slow croaking of frogs, and a line of silvery sheen shows through black trunks, and boles, and drooping leaves. The path slants downwards, and there is a dank smell of mud and slime.

The tiger halts. There is something there in the shadows by the pool.

Suddenly the shingle scatters under rushing hoofs, there is a heavy galloping through the undergrowth and away among the loud leaves, and again, in the shelter of the adjoining forest—"*Pónk!*" . . .

The game-path descends the bank, and emerges in the

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open, under the moon; it passes over soft sand, up the misty river-bed, and leaves the shallow pool behind; there is more brushwood; more shingle; then rocks, warm and dark, and another black belt of trees ahead; more damp croakings of frogs, the distant plunge of a fish in deep water, and the whistling scream of an otter from the dim sandbank beyond. Another pool, shiveringly reflecting the starlit sky; then, suddenly, the old forest road.

A turn to the right away from the river, a leisurely padding up the slight incline, and the old tiger is on his nightly beat. Ahead of him stretches the well-known track, bordered by tall grass and the limbs of gaunt trees twisting spectral against a white moon.

Slowly he paces on. Some way ahead a lean grey form canters wheeling in the dust; then, slinking sidewise, halts with back-turned burning eyes. Then a ghastly long-drawn ululation pierces the quivering night—

"*Phnee-e-a-a-o-ooh!*"

It is the *kólá bálú*—the solitary jackal, legended to act as scout to aged tigers—a ghoulish creature, mangy and glabrous, round which folk-lore weaves a multiplicity of horrid tales and superstitions.

Old Lungra moves steadily along. There is a wisp of low dust, and that flitting shape has vanished into the surrounding thicket. Far away can be heard a stirring in the carpeting leaves. The old tiger has halted a moment, but is again prowling softly on. He turns a corner and emerges into the white lustre of moonlight that floods the deserted road.

In the distance rises an old tree. Silvered on one side, it flings a deep shadow to the other. One great leafy limb hangs drooping over the track.

A sudden crackle in the silence underfoot, a brittle snapping of large dry leaves! And what is this? and why? A band of teak leaves spread across the moonlit roadway!

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A tiger standing long and motionless. Then a cautious paw set forward, a few more wary steps, and another long halt.

What strange feeling of disquietude is this? An obscure sensation impinging on the dull animal, brainsome, vague influence of mind, indefinite, dim—the same mysterious warning that he had felt those nights so long ago when fired at near his "kills"! . . .

But the peaceful moon shines on; the dome of the calm sky glitters; the hushed jungle rings with a soothing trill, and softly echoes the far-off tapping of the night-jars. This realm of night is his and his alone. Is not this his chosen beat, and shall he not stalk it now until the distant dawn, the jungle-cock's first clear reveillé? Are there not wild hogs at the next bend of the old river—and if not hogs nor sámbar, lies not the village of Pili beyond, with cattle—beeves, and sweet red flesh, until the early mewing of the peafowl?

So at last reassured, the fleeting warning gone, he paces on once more. Noiselessly he travels in the bright moon's rays—a slow and gliding shadow casting a monstrous shade.

Now the old tree looms above him; the gloom of that projecting bough lies athwart his unconscious path. He is passing—passing from the moonlight to the shadow, the light to the dark.

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TOLD BY THE DOCTOR

IT was a wet night in the rains, and late. Most of our fellows had left the mess, and the old Doctor and we two, after several games of 'Snookers,' had passed into the ante-room and flung ourselves into deep chairs.

The conversation turned to *shikár*. Ours was a little station where much of the after-dinner talk hinged on shooting topics, for many of us were keen sportsmen, and there was more game to be had in the neighbourhood than is to be found round and about most military stations nowadays.

We were recalling reminiscences of bygone days, and each had some little anecdote to relate of past shooting seasons, which led us away into a series of discussions and controversies that lasted well into the already far-spent night, when the Doctor, calling for a fresh cigar, said: "Well, boys, I'll spin you a yarn that I seldom care to relate, for the truth is that, looking back now, I myself can scarcely believe that it ever occurred. I don't ask you to believe a word of it, mind you—let it pass as a yarn. But wait——"

"*Qui hi?*"

"*Hazúr!*"

"Three big whiskies and sodas!"

Our good old Doctor was one of the real old school, and although, in deference to the latest innovation, we called

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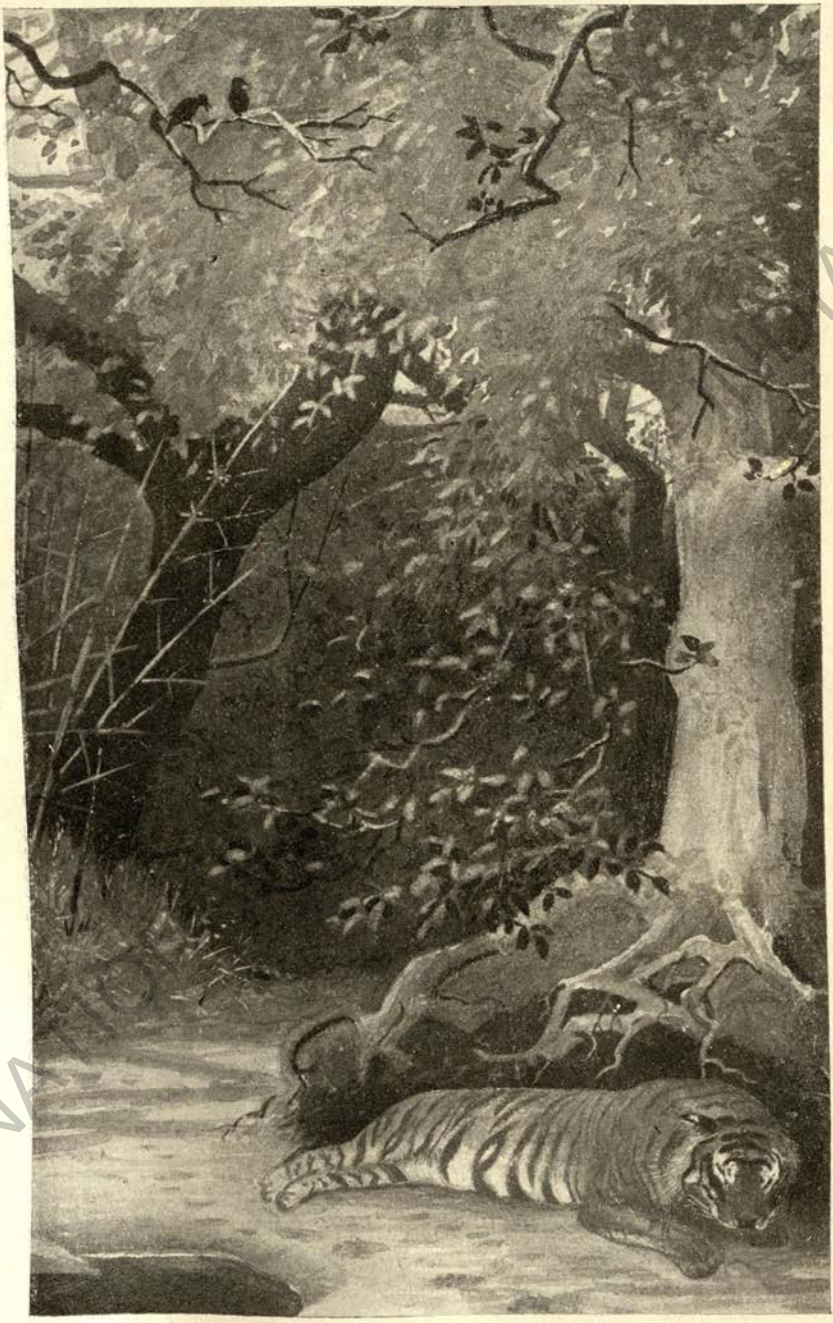

AT HOME

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him 'Colonel' in public, it was with relief that we reverted, when we could, to the name by which we had known him for many a year—and the relief was mutual.

"*Colonel!*" he would say. "D—— your colonels! Have I been your 'sawbones' all these years to have *that* flung at my head in my old age?"—this to such of us as were the more intimate of his friends.

After a pull at the long glasses we leant back, and the worthy old medico began.

"It was in the seventies, I must tell you, that the experience I am about to relate befell; and it was not very far from here."—The old boy named a district that had borne a great name for tigers.

"I was out on my usual hot-weather shoot, and arrived one day at a village near which I had been informed there was a solitary tiger of great age and enormous size that had frequented those jungles for a great many years. He had been fired at and hit by both *sahibs* and Kolis—the *shikáris* of those parts—and bore a reputation for unfailing cunning. He was also a 'very bad tiger,' and had killed his three or four men. His latest performance in this line had taken place not long before my advent, when he had strolled out of the jungle in full daylight, and removed the cranium of an old woman who was picking up *mhowa* flowers under a tree. Not that he was in any way a man-eater. His performances in the man-killing line were reputed to be merely in revenge for the harm done him by mankind—he was lame of one leg, and carried a match-lock ball in his back.

"The jungle he frequented was quite impossible to beat, if indeed one could ever have persuaded beaters to enter it. The very sight of a buffalo tied up as a bait drove him away for days. And he never approached a natural 'kill' or any waterhole without making a complete circle round it and carefully examining all the adjacent trees. He would stop all traffic along the jungle tracks in the neigh-

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bourhood for days at a time. In fact, he was a perfect *shaitán!*

"Now there are lots of tigers with more or less similar habits; but I had bagged several of the kind, and felt that, given patience, time, and luck, I should assuredly remove this one's skin to the security and comfort of my bungalow or to that of the old place at home. And, as usual, I was right!" and, gently closing his eyes, the doctor complacently blew an enormous cloud from his Mayo cheroot.

"Well, I started trying for that tiger.

"His special bit of jungle was a little level valley encircled by an amphitheatre of low rocky hills and drained by a winding *nála*—a beautiful *nála;* its bed of smooth, clean, golden sand, overhung by charming trees and green bushes, broken here and there by outcrops of sandstone boulders, and holding, at the mouth of the little vale, marked by the big tamarinds as the deserted village site of Páldi, one solitary spring-fed pool of crystal clear water. This snug retreat the brute had entirely to himself, for he would permit no other felines to share it; and the woodcutters of the villages in the vicinity, the only people who ever went that way, never dared so much as to pass the little gorge by the waterhole that led to his sylvan fastness.

"I saw at once that ordinary methods would not prevail, so, after a day or two spent in cautious reconnaissance of the scene of future operations, I at length prevailed on some of the inhabitants of the villages round about to lend me the services of their cattle, thus possessing myself of a 'scratch' herd of bovines of decidedly mixed appearance, mostly very scraggy. This motley assemblage I caused to be driven, one evening about five o'clock, through the dreaded pass and into the little strath I have already described.

"A forest fire had swept over a portion of the glade, and the half-starved kine, their senses ravished by a sight of the fresh green grass that sprouted from the blackened

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ground, lost no time in scattering themselves in all directions, the cowbells tinkling merrily in a way that was doubtless peculiarly fascinating to a tiger. I immediately ascended to my *machán,* which had been erected with great care in the branches of a big *mhowa* tree that flung its boughs over the pool, and all the men at once returned to camp—the cowherds intensely relieved, as they had done their work in fear and trembling, even under the protection of myself and my orderly with rifles.

"I may remind you of my invariable custom of sitting up at night *alone.*

"As the sun sank in a bank of murky clouds and a fitful wind began sighing through the forest, I began to make up my mind that I was in for an all-night vigil of the fruitless kind we know so well, for I could hear the cowbells tinkling nearer and nearer as the instinct of their wearers led them to make tracks for home, and they approached the narrow outlet to the valley on their way. Shortly a bony old cow, the most knowing of the lot, hove in sight, then another, and another, each pacing slowly forward with rhythmically nodding head and swinging tail. The cunning plan had evidently failed, and the striped autocrat was presumably 'not taking any.'

"Just, I say, as I was reconciling myself to the idea of sitting the night out, on the chance of the tiger coming to drink, there was a sudden mighty commotion in the rear of the herd; and a moment later a sea of tossing horns, stampeding hoofs, and upraised tails passed under my tree, as a crowd of wild, mad, panic-stricken cattle scurried through the pass, and out beyond, where the frenzied clacking of their bells died away in the direction of the nearest village. I felt that they *must* have left one of their number behind, and there came over me that self-same thrill that charms the heart when a heavy salmon takes one's 'Jock Scott' with a rush, and one enters on the nervous work of playing him on light grilse tackle.

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"'Hooked' the tiger certainly was, but whether I should ever bring him to the 'gaff' was quite another question.

"After the exciting flurry that had just taken place, the jungle recovered its wonted calm with extraordinary rapidity; and as the pool at my feet was the only water for some two miles around, I had no lack of company to interest me so long as light lasted. Birds of all descriptions, jackals, flights on flights of the painted sandgrouse dropping swiftly over the trees on to the moist cool sand, and, after drinking, rising again as suddenly with their clucking call; and then a large company of that marvellously wary bird, the peafowl, followed by a timid, hesitating herd of spotted deer. As night fell all these gradually departed, and, after the loud cries exchanged across the valley by the roosting peacocks, there descended a silence that could be felt.

"Later on a breeze sprang up, and while carrying the human taint well away in the right direction, served to drown any suspicious sounds which might scare away a shy animal. You know the extraordinary way *machâns will* creak in a dead calm!

"The waning moon was not due till about 11 p.m., so I produced my spoon, and untied my frugal meal of potato-pie which my servant had provided, after which a draught from the water *chágal* prepared me for a long vigil.

"It was an extremely dark night, for heavy lowering clouds in dense masses blotted out the stars, and gave me many a foreboding as regards having a clear moon later on. I settled my back against a branch, and gave myself up to reflection. I wondered how the tiger was getting along, and if he'd drink soon or late; or perhaps he might pay more than one visit to the pool during the enjoyment of his meal. What a funny old fellow was that Koli *shikâri* with whom I had had a talk that day; and how solemnly he had given me a quite unnecessary warning 'not to sleep on any account'!

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THAT FATAL PAUSE

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"A thousand memories and fancies chased each other through my mind, as they will do on such occasions, and meanwhile a languor stole over the corporeal portion of me while my brain continued alert and unceasingly active. The end of it was that after starting violently once or twice from this borderland of dreams, I found myself admitting that after all a nap till moonrise would do no harm, and—I fell asleep.

* * * * * *

"You know that way one has, when the mind is prepared and expectant, of passing from sound sleep to absolute wakefulness — clear, sharp, wide-awakefulness? Well, in response to the light but firm pressure *of a hand on my arm,* I was instantly awake!

"In a moment, with dismay, I noted that the moon was not only up, but floated in a serene and cloudless sky, flooding the pool below me in pale clear light, while at my side *a figure sat* and pointed with a strangely bloated, swollen, bandaged arm at a dark mass that broke the silvered surface of the water below! They say the 'ruling passion is strong in death.' At any rate, acting on my first impulse—the whole scene, though lasting but a second, is indelibly imprinted on my memory—I raised the rifle that lay in my lap, and, getting the white card night-sight on the tiger's shoulder, fired.

"The brute rolled over on the sand, plunging, grunting, and struggling; and as it did so there came two light pats of an approving hand on my back, a deep-drawn sigh, and the still air was filled with the most appalling odour, which I at once recognised as the peculiar smell emanating from a patient in the last and hopeless stage of *pyæmia* or blood-poisoning!

"I whipped round. The *machán* was empty. I was absolutely alone. Not a sound disturbed the pale silence but a choking gasp from the expiring tiger. An owl

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hooted far up the glen. But that dreadful unhallowed reek of rotting humanity hung still, thick, choking, almost palpable, over, under, and around me!

"Why I spoke in English then I know not, but I leant over and said in a low voice, 'Who's there?' Then, recollecting myself, '*Kaon hai?*' Again I repeated in a voice that I scarcely recognised, 'Ho! *Kaon hui?*'

"The silence was paralysing and unbearable.

"I will ask you to imagine the horror of the situation. I am, as you know, not imaginative. I have seen strange things in my time; but the awful, petrifying effect of that moonlit dread, with its disgusting physical accompaniment, upset all the man in me, and I felt as a child feels when it starts quaking and whimpering from the terrors of nightmare to the soft throbbing blackness of night.

"I bore up awhile, in a rapidly increasing fear that quite mastered me. And then I could stand it no longer. Untying the cord I kept wound about my *chágal*, I let my rifle down to the ground, and followed hurriedly, regardless, thoughtless of barked shins and palms, fell the last few feet on my face, picked up my rifle, and with a glance at the dead tiger, made my way to camp, vainly trying to reconcile the scene I had just passed through with the fancies of a brain suddenly dragged from slumber.

"Reaching the sleep-steeped camp at 3 a.m., I helped myself to a stiff 'peg' and a cheroot, and lay smoking till dawn. I had a cup of coffee then, and accompanied my men back to the dead tiger. Half ashamed, I found myself furtively looking about the base of the tree in which I had spent the night. Not a mark in the soft soil but those of my men and myself! And in that clear sweet morning light, remembering that the odour of a well-fed and lately fed tiger might be sufficient to account for what had persuaded my nocturnal fears, I caught myself smiling at the strange fancies that will come to a man in the hours of darkness. Leaving the men to skin the tiger, which was

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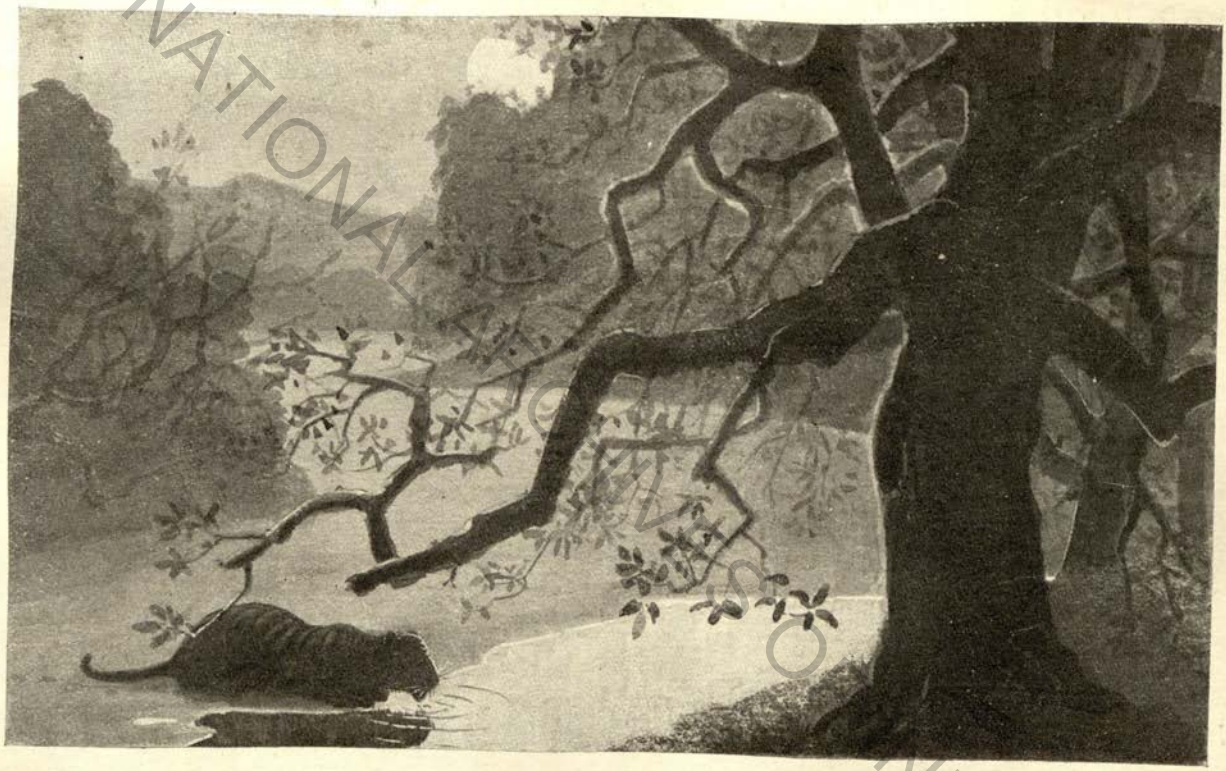

A DARK MASS BROKE THE SILVERED WATER

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one of the largest I have ever seen, I strolled back in more cheerful mood towards camp, shooting a couple of peafowl *en route*. The old Koli came with me. I could see he wanted badly to say something, and shortly out it came.

"'The *sahib* returned very early,' he said. I assented. A silence.

"'Did the *sahib* keep awake all night?'

"The pertinacity of the old man annoyed me unaccountably, and I answered shortly and evasively.

"'Without doubt,' he replied, 'the *sahib* is a rajah and I a poor man.'

"Nearer camp he spoke again. 'I will show the *sahib* something if he will follow me,' and he led the way into a tangle of low thorn and scrub. Chopping a prickly tendril with his *kulhári*, he dragged aside a mass of creepers, and there at our feet lay a weather-beaten rectangular laterite slab. In its upper surface was cut an oblong depression, in which lay traces of mortar.

"'Marble slabs make nice curry-stones,' thought I.

"'What was the *sahib's* name?' I said, seating myself on a boulder.

"'How should I know?' was the reply. 'When I was so big'—and the old Koli lowered his skinny hand—'*he* came here and wounded a tiger—*that* tiger, they say; but it jumped on him, and in two days he was dead. And the servants put him in the earth here. Next year another *sahib* came, and he brought a smooth white stone, and had this big one cut, and put it on the top, and departed. There are *badmash* people who might steal such stones, *sahib;* who knows?' 'Paldi was a *basti* then. It has now long been deserted, many days—many days.' And he slowly wagged his head in ruminative mood.

Moved by a sudden shamefaced curiosity, I put him a question—

"'You are a Koli?'

"'*Sahib!*'

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"'A *shikári?*'

"'*Sahib!*'—with another inclination of the head in assent.

"'Do you ever sit up at night here for game?'

"He lifted his head, as he squatted at my side, and looked me keenly in the eye; then—

"'It is my bread, *sahib*, and I have many children. There is much game in this jungle—*sámbar, rohis, chital;* much game!' And he sighed. 'But I do not often sit now, *sahib*, not *here!* But when I *have* to sit, *sahib*, when times are hard, *I never sleep*,' and he gave me another queer look.

"'But what do *I* know, *sahib?* Your honour is a rajah and I a poor man. But it may be that now I may sit—and sleep too—in peace!'

"This was all I could get out of the old man, so I returned to my breakfast. But, as I went, I murmured to myself, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, my boy, than are dreamt of in *your* philosophy.'"

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"GHOOMING" FOR BEARS

SINCE anything savouring of mystery or a cheap method of attracting attention by the meretricious use of strange and bizarre titles is far removed from the intention of the writer, let him make his peace forthwith by declaring that the first word of the above heading is but a very ordinary Hindi word, anglicised, after the manner of the strangely compound verbiage indulged in by us illiterate but practical exiles, into a perhaps more expressive form of speech than is attainable by the use of purer language.

Having assured the reader, therefore, that *ghooming* is neither a patent food for captive bears nor yet a form of searching them out or dealing with these interesting plantigrade quadrupeds in a manner from which he need turn coldly, deeming it to be improper, it may possibly be useful for him to learn that to *ghoom* means to wander round and about—to prowl, in fact—being derived from the verb *ghoomna*. My *shikári* prefers to call it, this process, *ghoom-ghám*, after the alliterative or reiterative methods of the Eastern mind; and I have noticed that he makes especial use of this form of wording whenever the prowling or wandering around partakes of a hopeless and useless nature—gloomy in fact.

I don't think there is anything particularly new about this *ghooming* for bears, nor is it in any way a patent process. It was suggested to me one night when I had been persuaded to perch on the limb of a *gular* tree and

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await the approach of certain black bears which were reported to visit the tree nightly for the sake of the ripe red figs then yielded by it so profusely. The moon was at about her full, and the light she shed most brilliant; the night soft and still, when the slightest sound may be clearly heard—an ideal chance for an easy shot at any black Bhálu who might come my way attracted by the long-range scent of the *gular* figs.

My hiding-place was not uncomfortable, but as the night rolled on and the Great Bear revolved slowly round the pole star, it became borne in on me that this was an unprofitable form of amusement, this passive waiting on the capricious wanderings of the earthly prototypes of the great constellation above my head. The position of its pointers gave the hour as past midnight. I sat on awhile immersed in further thought. Thus it came to me that why should I too not be a wanderer through the moonlight, a night bird, a beast of prey seeking its quarry through the silent jungle? The chances of meeting with something worth shooting would be multiplied manifold by exchanging my fixed position for one of changeful activity.

I was alone, so had to lower my rifle to the ground by an improvised rope; then descended myself by the aid of the gnarled processes on the trunk of the big fig tree. Just as I put foot to *terra firma*, some creature rushed off suddenly through the crackling leaves; and every whit as precipitately did my involuntary muscles shoot me a full six feet upwards, to cling awhile in safety. However, 'twas but a mongoose, or some such insignificant *janwar*. Once more, therefore, I set foot to earth; picked up the rifle; looked right and left; and chose a path which would bring the moon rather behind me. Thus I began to ghoom.

There were no tigers to alarm by casual shooting in that part of the country, so it was permissible to fire at anything one deemed worth the trouble or the practice. The locality was an elevated plateau of considerable size, rejoicing in the

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name of Mákla, and composed of low undulations, woody terraces, and, below them, grassy glades intersected by small jungle and cattle paths. The woods clothing the sides of the winding terraces were fairly thick, and under the moon they loomed dark and mysterious, with here and there a suspicious crackle of leaf or stick. Far away a little Korku village had long since sunk to rest, but some of its wakeful curs bayed the moon at intervals, only adding to the sense of sleep and rest. This sense, however, is only partially correct during a moonlight night in India, for a large number of the wild inhabitants are now not only abroad, but extremely busy. The deep hum from a sweet-flowered tree overhead tells one that the bees, who hate the hot sun, are hard at work. Nightjars are incessantly tapping out their rapid notes of the love-making season. The owls are abroad. And from a deep glen that lies sheer below the edge of the plateau we are traversing can be heard the staccato note of a watchful sámbar, which has seen something suspicious while wandering in search of food.

The little path leads away along the plateau below the terraced slope of jungle, dipping into a little *nala*, and seems to continue its course beyond it, over a patch of short dry white grass. On this clear-lit space stands a black object; which brings the *shikári* to a halt. Whatever the creature may be, it seems to be listening intently. Perhaps it has seen us? But no! It turns and moves in our direction. *Shikár* kit of the proper kind is almost invisible at night. As the black shape descends out of sight into the little depression nearer us, we run forward on tiptoe, and, just as it reappears, down we go, lying prone on the ground. The creature approaches. Is it a bear, or a pig? Moving slowly onwards, it reaches a tiny bush—at which distance we have made up our mind to fire. Turning sidewise, the creature lifts its head in the pale light, and seems to be gently scratching its brawny throat

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against a little twig. It is a huge boar, with grizzled grey chaps and tushes gleaming white, twenty-five yards away. If we can hit this target, we should be tolerably certain of a bear under similar circumstances. In the lying position, therefore, on the short sward, the night sight is brought to bear on its forehead. Just at that instant the boar throws up his head and seems to be gazing intently in our direction — but it is too late; there is a long, bluish spurt of flame from the heavy cordite rifle, and the thud of the explosion travels reverberating along the line of wooded terraces. Ere its echoes have died away, an intermittent spasmodic kicking is going on close to the right of the bush, where some black object is seen to be stretched out. Still we lie prone. A charging boar by moonlight is not an easy matter to stop! The kicking grows feebler. We rise, and reloading, go slowly forward. As we thought, it is a huge mountain boar, a hoary patriarch, bearing testimony to the high feeding of these cool and fertile plateaux. His lower tushes project three and a half inches from the jaw; there will be quite five to six inches more of ivory embedded in its bony matrix.

And there is the mark of the bullet—just above the eye! With this mountain of flesh we shall make great friends with the Korkus; while with the shot has been gained a sense of confidence that we *can* bring off a bull's-eye by the light of the moon. Otherwise it seems a shameful murder, even although the nearest rideable country be thirty miles away. Poor old boar!

Standing there it seems as though no rude shot had ever been fired; the jungle is as it was, the night birds as wakeful, the stillness as unbroken and undisturbed.

The season is late April—not much fruit at this particular season in the jungle—and the *mhowa* must have ceased dropping its sickly flowers long since. Yet—we remember having noted one or two trees of bare appearance and leafless—a sign that all their flowers have not

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been shed—as we rode along not far from here the previous day. Perhaps they may still attract the bears. In their direction therefore, and let the process of *ghooming* be resumed!

Winding round promontory after promontory of dark terraces of woods, the yellow-white grass grows long and rank, and the moon, shining down with her peculiar cold stare, exercises a strange influence on the eyesight. Everything seems unreal. Each black rock or fallen tree-trunk appears invested with occult powers of motion, and many are the halts to stare, and peer, and rub our eyes and stare again. The night must be far spent in this noiseless, shadowy walk of ours; the feet move mechanically, the brain feels a sleepy stagnation creeping over all—until one realises the enormous and pleasant difference between this, so leisurely a perambulation in an atmosphere of perfect temperature and translucency, and that, the disadvantage of a tramp abroad in the sweltering glare of an Indian sun.

We fall to picturing the ways and habits of the bears that we seek: how, now many hours since, they must have come clambering uncouthly upwards from the precipice-girdled ravines surrounding these pleasant uplands, to emerge on these grassy glades and make for the well-known trees—mother and cubs; male and female; or crusty old he-bear moving along and puffing by his lone. They will be right in the middle of the woods now; but by-and-by they must, when they instinctively become aware of the approach of dawn, cross the open grass once more on their downward, homeward way.

Wandering along in this manner, it must have been about the hour of two in the morning that we became aware of a distant sound from the dark line of trees to the left. There was not the slightest stirring of the air, all was dead and white and ghostly. We halted—but the slight sound had ceased. Moving onwards once more, it

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sounded again, louder, and faintly rustling; and was now located on the face of the sloping terrace about three hundred yards away—a slow, gentle 'crash crash' of heavy animals wandering about in the dry leaves. Pigs perhaps —bears just as likely. The little path is now deserted for the grass land, and gradually, silently, we approach the foot of the bosky slope. Still that steady soft crashing and crackling half-way uphill in the black shadow of big trees. Then we begin to pick our way gently under the woods step by step.

At length the sounds in the carpeting of dead leaves appear to come from under the large *mhowa* tree now only about thirty yards distant. We cannot get much nearer, for every step we have taken has made some slight rustle in the fallen leaves, and each time the invisible eaters of *mhowa* have stopped their foraging to listen suspiciously. Of what can they be suspicious? Tigers and leopards do not attack bears; man is never abroad in the jungle at this ghostly hour of the night. Perhaps, however, the apparently still air has slowly wafted them a suspicious whiff!

Then the snuffing and stirring recommence. Under the *mhowa* tree it is dark and dim, but out of its immediate shadow patches of moonlight fall on the thin grass and leaves covering the ground, and after a long silence a greyish patch is seen to emerge and point in our direction. Slowly it is followed by a black but indistinct mass, and the bear, as now we can tell it to be, turns its broadside and stands snuffing discontentedly. Behind it in the shadows there is yet more heavy crunching and chewing among the leaves; its companion has evidently found something tasty underneath their covering. Then number one moves a step or two forward, and the moon's rays illuminate the hairy ridge of his back.

There is very little light under the trees, and the white card of the night sight seems difficult to find. By moving the rifle muzzle up and down, however, something-

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is seen. It is lowered, raised to what seems the correct level, and for the second time that night out darts the blue flame of cordite.

The cracking explosion is followed instantly by an appalling uproar! We "stand by" for developments—and a tree-trunk *is* a comforting thing in a way! There is a murderous disturbance going on under the *mhowa* tree; rollings about, crashings of timber, and a most heart-rending vociferation in which all the bears of Mákla—and they are not few—seem to be taking part. The very trees above us are crashing and whooping! It is a colony of *langúr* monkeys that, disturbed by the terrifying din below them, are cursing and leaping about aloft, demoniacal figures looming black and spectral against the yellow disc of the moon. Suddenly the yelling ceases, but the dry leaves are still being scattered in all directions. There is a "*Umph-a-umph-a!*" heard retreating rapidly; and not long afterwards two dark objects, one of them coughing as it goes, are seen to trundle across an open space in the trees fifty yards away—too quick for a shot.

It would be useless to buoy up the reader with further hopes. A search revealed no defunct bear. There had been but two, and the wounded one—for the time at least—had got away! Wearily we descended the hillside to the grassland, and resumed our way.

At the farthest end of the night's beat, where the little forest road begins its descent to the deep Sípna valley, we halted, and raised the water-bottle; and a sandwich was followed by a cheroot. Our late failure with the bears had somewhat damped the spirits and caused a sensation of gloom to pervade the night's wanderings—this indeed was *ghoom-ghám;* and the one redeeming feature of the proceedings was that my *shikári* orderly was not here to exasperate still further with his lantern-jawed expression of hopeless resignation. Too old a bird to be cast down even by an unusual run of bad luck, if left to myself, the despairing

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appearance of the Oriental under defeat never yet failed to exercise the most dangerously homicidal feelings in my breast. But to-night it was different. The cheroot with its glowing eye and soft wreaths of soothing smoke soon wafted all such feelings away; and shortly we sprang up, refreshed. Once more we *ghoomed.*

Turning northward this time, it was the eastern portion of the plateau that we faced, rather rougher country than on the side we had lately traversed, and where the terraced woods are nearer the edge of the plateau, and the intervening grassland less wide in consequence. A little deep-cut miniature glen took us through dark trees awhile, and we then emerged once more on the flat. Again the eyes became aware of that extraordinary kind of moon-blindness, when the sleeping landscape seemed to shimmer and fade, reappear and fade again, rocks to resemble wandering bears, ghostly tree-trunks the chest of some intently watchful tiger or panther. The pointers of the Great Bear now lay below the level of the pole star, and pointed upward, the lower of the two stars being almost hidden by the line of dark trees. It must therefore have been about an hour before dawn, that mysterious time of night when the most nocturnal of creatures seem to pause awhile and slumber, when even night-birds are silent, and mankind, with all his world, is wrapped in the most intense and death-like sleep, all Nature at her very feeblest ebb, her breathing scarcely audible. An intense longing for sleep became almost overpowering in its peremptoriness, a desire to sink down anywhere and curl one's self up without delay. But we are nearing the end of our moonlight prowling now. Not far ahead is the grove of indigo-black trees below the village itself; there is a well there, and wild creatures often seek a drink at the little puddle which is fed by the drainings of the women's waterpots as they visit the well at sundown. One look at the well therefore—after that a short nap till sunrise. And so we push forward on the last of our *ghoom.*

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Pigs have a certain way of walking. "Sister Mary" walked like that perhaps. Deer have another. Members of the family *Felis* do not when wandering at night pick out the noisiest heaps of dried leaves and tramp heavily therein. It is plainly a bear therefore that is making, openly and fearlessly, that loud crashing under a very big spreading banyan tree to the left of the open space round the well. There are one or two tussocks of grass beside the little pathway; behind one of these we sink down in a sitting position. Fifty yards away a black thing had just emerged from the banyan tree's shadow.

The black object was the head of a big male bear, and a very peculiar effect the moonlight had as it fell on this one portion of his frame, over the edge of the shading branches.

Gradually the object increased in size, swelled, grew taller, and out into the moonlight waddled the bear himself. His big incurved paws came marching bandy-legged across the bare grass, and his uncouth lurching bulk threw a long black shadow on the yellow ground in front as he advanced steadily.

"Do bears charge at night?"—was a question that I remember occurred with lightning speed at that moment.

"Why not?" came the mental reply. "They are not bad at it sometimes during the day, are they?"

"Oh, Lord!" returned my *alter ego*, or perhaps my astral self, "*neither they are!*"

"But we can't help that," came some third and innermost voice. "Here is a bear!—hast come to shoot bears?"—which last was incontrovertible, accompanied as it was by a mental illustration of my orderly drooping his sad jaw, with the words "*ghoom-ghám!*" issuing therefrom.

By this time the bear had advanced a few paces and turned slightly to his right. His head now pointed rather to my left than straight towards me; the moment was auspicious. The rifle came up, elbows on knees, the white

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card rested well in the middle of that black mass. I can remember the extraordinary sensation conveyed by that hairy waddling thing, the short white moonlit grass, black trees, and dead silence. Next moment there was a *bang!* and a blow on my shoulder. The momentary flash had gone, the echoes rolled away into distance,—and a black rock, as it were, lay there motionless: then, still sitting in my place, I could see a convulsive movement of the head. That, too, was shortly stilled. . . .

Leaving him lying there, I climbed the path up the little terrace-side to the sleeping village. There was an old forest hut hard by, and in its verandah I found my roll of bedding. The old mare was picketed not far away. In a few minutes I was asleep.

Perhaps I had slept half an hour when there was a quick thudding of naked heels on hard ground, a clinking of jingling metal, and a graceful upright figure swept by with long quick strides. An upward-curving brown arm, the dark silhouette of a big brass waterpot poised aloft against the luminous Eastern sky, where twinkled the morning star, and the figure was gone, with its retreating "clink-clank" of barbaric anklets. Then more hurrying feet and clashing ornaments, as bevy on bevy of dusky Rebeccas went swiftly and silently down the path to the well. Scanty the water-supply therein at this season, it was only the early birds among the village damsels who obtained their household utensils full; therefore their hurry.

Then, as the faint light spread wider and higher behind the distant mountains, and the jungle-cocks began calling loudly in all directions, I turned me over to complete my nap, smiling as I pictured the little Korkunis' affright to discover what lay that morning in their path to the well.

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TEAK AND BAMBOO

! (THE SÁMBAR)

"*DHANK*——!"

Which is my name, in the language of the Korkus, and the most appropriate of all my names, expressing my voice as nearly as can any human word—that abrupt, sonorous, trumpet-like note, which, once heard ringing through the gorges of my native hills, can never be forgotten.

"*Dhánk!*" What memories it conjures up! The shimmering surface of the moonlit jungle pool, where the ripples widen about our feet: the bell of alarm from some watchful hind, warning, perchance, of the forest king's midnight approach: the first rosy shafts of the rising sun, touching the solemn peaks that rise in solid grandeur far across the tumultuous sea of forest-clad hills, in whose dark deep valleys long *rausa* grass drips chill dews: the little open glade on the *salai*-studded slope of some precipitous spur, where the saplings show frayed and red from the rubbing of our stags' antlers.

It was amid these Central Indian hills that I first saw the light—at the head of a deep glen, where the arching trees, roped together by the long, thick tendrils of the *mahúl* creeper (*Bauhinia scandens*) met their green canopy far above our heads, and the sunlight, filtering through a well-nigh impenetrable mass of verdure, fell here and there in broken patches on the tangled mass of undergrowth—for I was born during the rainy season.

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I remember the first time my dam led me out on the little game-path winding along the steep mountain-sides that hemmed in our retreat; above us the hilltops were lost in driving mist, while from below rose the deep booming of a torrent in angry spate, as it leapt, turbid and yellow, over a short basalt cliff, and roared down the valley to join the swollen Tapti.

Elsewhere it was still and oppressive, and the remains of the last downpour dripped heavily off the sodden teak leaves. Far down the valley a thin curl of blue smoke behind the trees marked the huts of some hill-folk, while away out beyond the low foot-hills lay the distant clear-cut line of the plains, meeting the sky like the horizon of a vast sea.

Our life is seldom a stirring one; we live in quiet retirement in our lonely forests, not often seeing more of the outer world than the little Korku hamlet at the mouth of our valley affords when it lies wrapped in sleep, and we wander nightly to visit the few *bér* bushes in its vicinity, or when we hear the distant chopping of some solitary woodcutter's axe.

To live thus is to be sombre, deliberate, almost melancholy, and anyone who has studied our habits must know this to be our nature, although he will also have had experience of our keen perceptions and extreme natural watchfulness.

During my earlier days my dam and I seldom wandered beyond the limits of the glen where I was born, which was inhabited by only a few more of our species, including one stag. I saw him now and again only, for he wandered little, and showed a great reluctance to pass through the forest while his horns were in the sensitive velvet stage. Among the more interesting neighbours were a couple of our little cousins, the *khákar*, or barking deer, whose ruddy little coats were to be seen in the grass bordering the thicker copses, their white rabbit-like tails raised in

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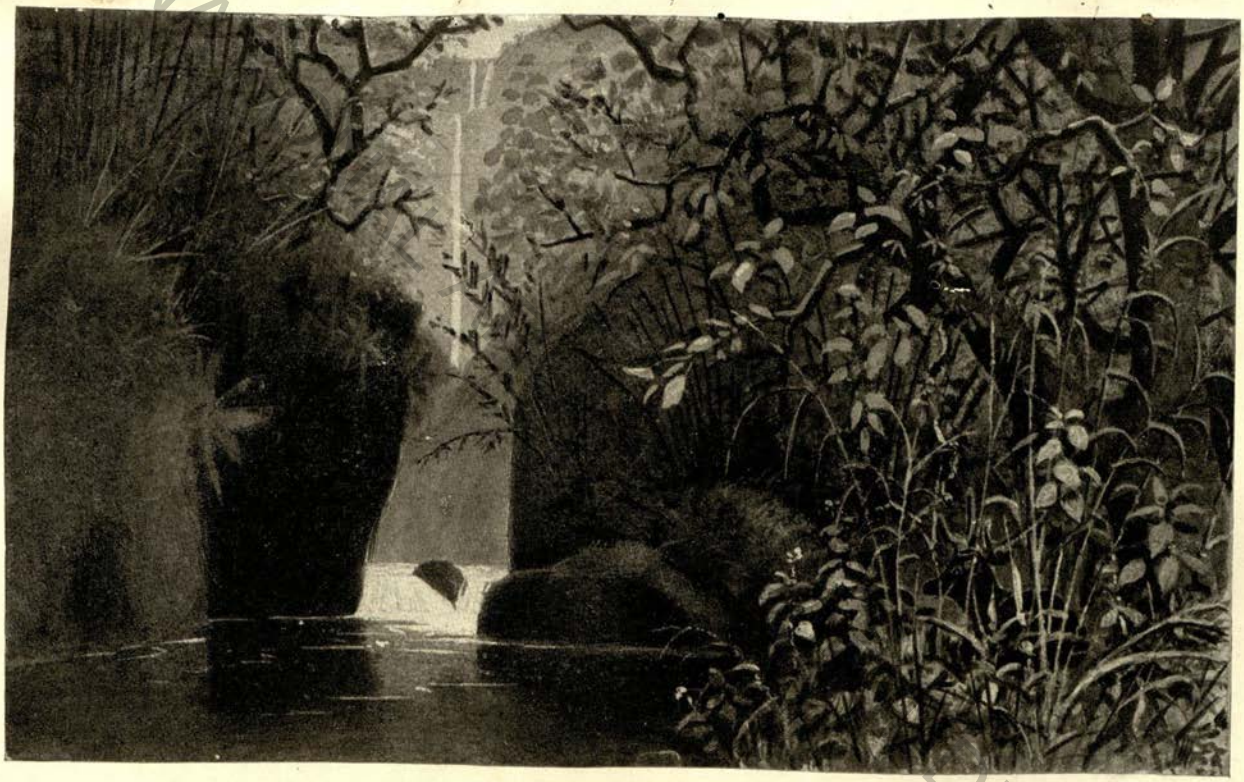

AT THE HEAD OF A DEEP GLEN

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ridiculous fashion as they darted in play behind the tree-stems; while the valley resounded at dawn and eve with the shrill "*Kuckkaa—kiya—kuck'm!*" of our cheery friends, the grey jungle-cocks.

As time passed the rain ceased, and the sun began his work on the jungles: the leaves fell, the *salai* trees stood out gaunter and barer each day, and the fast-yellowing grass seeded its vicious crop of tiny spears, which, strange to say, are looked on as a tit-bit by the stags, who, about this time, are beginning to roar and collect in view of the approaching rutting season.

Early one morning, as we stood by the yet running waters of our glen, we were startled by the sharp bark of our neighbours, the *khákar*. "*Aaow—aaow!*" sounded their little voices, as they rapidly threaded the well-known thickets, and shortly there rang out the deep bell of a sámbar hind, as the whole ravine waked to sudden panic, and the jungle crashed before the irresistible rush of the large deer. Darting to my dam's side, with cocked tail, I found her trembling, facing down the bed of the stream, her large ears spread to catch the slightest sound, and then, as some little reddish forms appeared slinking round a far rock, we turned, and swiftly passed through a bamboo coppice, up over a steep knoll, and suddenly stopped short again. A pattering sound swept up the banks, and a glimpse of our ruthless foes, the wild dogs, vanishing up-stream, where the rest of the herd had pursued their mad flight. Again we swiftly climbed, and at last stood, with heaving flanks, to hear a faint, far-off yelp, before we crossed the ridge and plunged into the jungle slopes of another great *khóra;* nor did we stay our way till yet another ridge and glen divided us from our erstwhile home.

Descending more leisurely at length, there suddenly appeared before us the great head and neck of a large stag, who regarded our advent with lordly surprise, his

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sweeping antlers springing from a head poised grandly on a massive, shaggy-maned neck. The bristles on his broad back were raised, and his tail stuck stiffly out as he faced us, and then, curling his lip and drawing his breath with a slight hissing noise through his teeth, he slowly bent his neck, and with a powerful stroke of his horns, to which, scarcely clean of their late covering of "velvet," there still adhered some strips of rough skin, scored a deep gash on the stem of a *salai* sapling.

"The Red Ones!" he growled. "Ah! they were here yesterday: how these ill weeds increase. It is not like old times when they were scarce!" And in spite of bravado his tone betrayed a tinge of suppressed fear. Passing downhill, I stopped a moment to gape at him, as he bent his great strength against the frayed sapling that groaned under his antlers, and rained red strings of peeled bark on the grass below; when he paused, and again lifting the corner of his mouth and distending his eye-pits, from which there exuded a strange sickly sweet odour, edged majestically towards me and slowly lowered his sharp tines. His temper was evidently uncertain; so, with a skip, I rejoined my mother, and we wound down a slippery grass slope to take up our new quarters.

We found ourselves in a much finer glen than that we had left; it ran up right under the precipices buttressing the mighty Bairát, which raises its flat-topped bulk four thousand feet above the sea. A stone detached from the cliffs fell crashing into the dry leaves at our feet, and the faint whoops of the great grey apes sounded far above our heads as they sprang in play among the bare white branches of a torchwood tree which jutted from a ledge in the sheer face of black basalt. In the cool depths of bamboo thicket high up the ravine side was our day retreat, where the wild plantain grew in the rocks overhanging us, and the sun scarcely ever penetrated; while at the *dêwar*, where one ravine met another, the valley expanded into a charming

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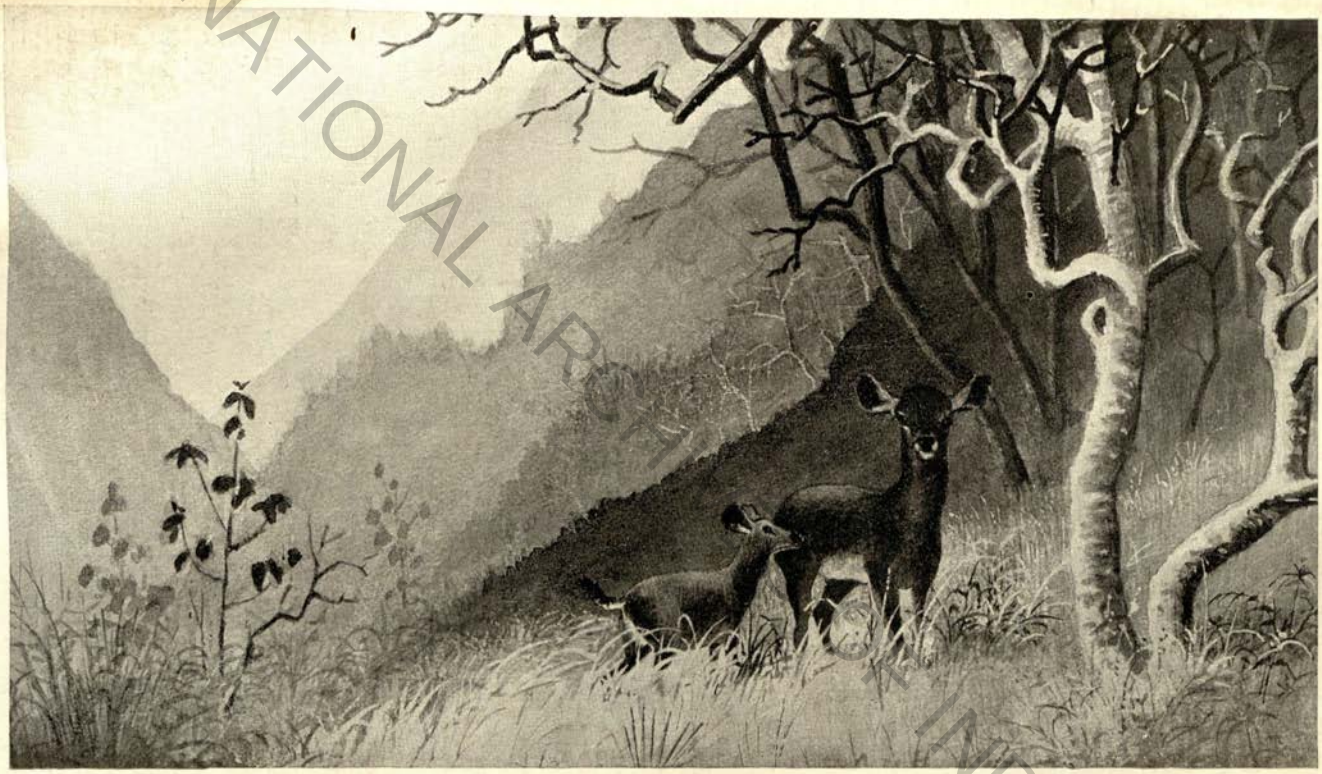

STOOD, WITH HEAVING FLANKS

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little glade, dotted with the *aola* trees that bear our favourite berries. A little farther down were the pools of "twelve-month" water, and the *lótán*, where the stags rolled nightly in the mire; while in many spots the numerous peeled trees and trampled dusty earth betokened the *akhára*, or arenas, where they met on moonlight nights; when their challenging roar echoed through the silent forest, and the hinds, their feet crackling the great dry teak leaves, trooped out like spectres to watch.

Such was the Jámgarh *khóra* in the old time, and there I passed my uneventful youth, which period I will pass over without comment, save that I twice experienced a "beat," when the line of yelling Korkus passed along the steep hillside, and I received my first sharp lessons in the art of "breaking back"—a highly simple and successful operation when properly carried out.

It takes us many long years to arrive at maturity and our full strength of limb and antlers; and six years passed before I began to hold up my head with reason.

My horns fell regularly every spring, until they approached their present proportions; since then I have noticed that I retain them unshed for longer periods.

My present pair, of which I may remark there is reason to be proud, have not fallen since they grew the summer before last; nor will they be shed this year if I am any judge; however, all of us may not fare similarly.

Our great size and the difficulty of concealing ourselves when once we are noticed, added to the heat of the day, have necessitated very nocturnal habits; and wandering all night in search of food as we do, it is needful for us to hide and sleep when the sun is up.

Our eyesight is very keen, even on dark nights, and, combined with a highly developed sense of smell, serves to protect us from such noxious animals as wander by night.

By sundown we are on the move; it may be towards some patch of *kútki*, tilled on the level uplands by the Korkus—

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who vainly rattle empty kerosene tins, or pull an ingenious arrangement of wooden clappers all night—or through the forest in search of fallen fruits. And so, feeding all night, we drink at some pool before daylight, and at sunrise are well on our way to our *baitak*, or "form." Personally I like a good mud-bath, after which I scrape the caked mire off my sides against some handy tree, or shake myself like a dog; then, culling a toothsome morsel here and there as I slowly wander up the damp bed of the stream, the first rays of the sun tempt me to loiter in their gentle warmth, till awakened nature reminds me that the night is past, and I mount the familiar hillside, to settle down in my favourite couch overlooking the valley, by the pollard teak tree or, if it be summer, under the bamboos higher up.

If it is seldom that you see me, you must blame your eyesight; and remember that on our hills to move is to be seen, to stand motionless is to hide, and that of this our race is well aware. "To see without being seen" is the motto for our jungles, and I have often stared right in your face, your eyes all but meeting mine, as you passed on, noting in wonder the numerous traces of my horns and hoofs.

The memory of my first big fight? Ah, it seems as yesterday!

I had been away from my *khóra* the previous day, having wandered some distance during the preceding night. I remember when night fell, and the evening glow gave place to a moonlight almost as bright, I descended the sheering mountain-side, and, winding down a tremendous open grassy spur that sunk swiftly to the hazy depths of Jámgarh below, paused ere entering the path of teak scrub, half-way down, with its heavy heads of thick green leaves—for the season was early November.

Hark! A faint roar rose from the glen! I stood listening with tense nerves, and then recognised a rival's voice. Indignant, I hastened my descent.

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Reaching and passing up the bottom of the ravine, I again clearly heard the hoarse challenge, and halted. "*Dhánk!*" my lusty young voice burst forth in fierce acceptance, and with hastening steps I clattered over the boulders and sprang up the bank. A fringe of thick coppice surrounded the large *akhára* of our glen, and through this I forced my head and shoulders, and glared forth into the arena.

There, facing the moon, whose cold rays fell on his wild eyeballs and bristling mane, stood a hoary old stag. Throwing up his muzzle, he gave vent to a hoarse, whistling, broken-voiced bellow, displaying in that motion a throat and chest livid with deep scars. The tips of his thin, sharp-pointed horns—for he was past his prime—gleamed dully against the dark background, where the indistinct forms of some hinds mingled with the shadows cast by the trees.

The scene roused me to an unutterable fury, and I slowly emerged from the copse and faced him. He turned his bloodshot eyes on me. And thus we glared at each other, every hair erect, tails stiffly raised, and wide-opened eyepits glistening with the sickly-smelling secretion of the rutting season. A sudden silence fell: the jungle seemed to wake and hold its breath: a nightjar "*Chuck, chuck, chuckoo'd*" in the distance: we each paced forward slowly: and then, with one swift rush, our antlers crashed together! Round and round, now back, now forwards, as one or the other gained some momentary advantage, raged the furious battle: the earth was torn up under the spurning of our widespread feet; saplings snapped under our mad, blind rushes; sticks and leaves flew as though a whirlwind caught them up. At length we paused for breath, horn to horn, leaning against each other, open-mouthed, eyes showing white, and blood clotting our manes or dripping on the dried leaves below. Then at it again, forced to our knees, heaving up again, resisting and boring, horn grating on

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horn, scoring the ground deep with the mighty thrusts of our hind feet, till, almost despairing myself, I felt my antagonist weaken. But with indomitable fury the veteran resumed the onslaught.

At length, his gasping breath whistling in his parched old throat, and contesting every foot with untameable purpose, I gathered up all the reserve of my vigour, and with a huge effort bore him backwards; on the edge of the steep fall came the last blow, his footing slipped, and, driving a sharp tine deep into his labouring chest, he rolled down into the river-bed, accompanied by a shower of earth and loose stones.

Staggering to the edge, I looked down. There stood the old warrior, muzzle to the ground, and ears drooped in the humiliation of defeat; and, as I gazed, he slowly turned, and with a bubbling groan tottered away into the black shadow of a great mango tree that arched the *nála* lower down.

Then, flinging back my blood-stained antlers, one deep, exultant bell, in which were concentrated all my pent-up feelings, rang through the forest and died away on the silent night—

"*Dhánk!*"

The next morning, as I took my accustomed way up the *khora*, and paused ere facing the steep slope to my favourite form, accompanied by a few hinds, my eye caught a swift movement in the now dry *nála* bed; we had sighted each other simultaneously, and it was in vain that the tiger flattened his belly against the yellow sand, for my deep voice gave forth a sharp warning, and, with answering barks of alarm, the hinds crushed through the crackling carpet of leaves, and stood stamping their fore feet, while nothing escaped their large ears, which were spread to catch any suspicious sound, as they moved them first in this direction, then in that. With a baffled look on his cunning face the tiger rose, and disappeared round a bend in the ravine.

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Some days after this I saw a *sahib*, accompanied by two Korkus, coming up the glen. They were walking up the bed of the stream and pointing to the pugs of the tiger. Something made me move my head as I gazed down on them from among some dry bamboos on the top of an overhanging bank, and in an instant a Korku clutched the *sahib's* sleeve and, directing his attention to me, whispered, "*Burra dhank!*" but I, ever wary, had risen and withdrawn from view. Suddenly a sámbar's bark rang out from the *nála*—at the time I noticed nothing peculiar in it except that it sounded weak—and then another. In a moment of curiosity I stepped forward to investigate this strange occurrence. One of the Korkus had his hands up to his mouth, and the *sahib* had disappeared. Again came the bark, apparently from the Korkus, and I turned to plunge into the jungle. As I did so, a rifle exploded among the trees to my right, and I was felled to the ground.

Being on the edge of a steep fall, I rolled some distance ere I could regain my feet and stand up, paralysed with a numbing pain. Steps rushed towards me through the loud leaves, and, with an effort, I tottered downhill and gained the thicket bordering the stream, as the Korkus rushed up to turn me, waving their arms and shouting. With a frantic plunge I passed them, and, crossing the bed of the *nála* with a clatter, disappeared among the trees, just as a second bullet buried itself with a thud beyond me in the bank. A few steps more, and I came to a standstill, feeling faint and sick; then, seeing a small side *nála*, I crept a short distance up it, and had barely squatted in its sheltering grasses, and pressed my head to the ground, when my enemies came in sight, and, passing close by my hiding-place, their eyes fixed intently ahead, rapidly receded upstream.

There were now two *sahibs*, one of whom was gasping out as he ran, "A perfect monster!—a forty-five incher!"

Their footfalls grew faint in the distance, and at length

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I was able to creep from my nook, and, with horns laid back, stealthily retrace my way, and take a jungle path that led me finally, limping, halting, out of that glen and into the next.

Proceeding thus, my fears and the smart of my wound ever pressing me on, I drank at a pool, and, going stronger, had put some miles between me and the scene of the disaster before I crept under the thick tangle of a woody hillside and laid me down. My hurt was painful; but had long since ceased bleeding, being caked with leaves. Lying thus, the rapid twilight closed in, the pink glow died from the opposite hillside, and a single star trembled in the deepening sky. A big owl sent its weird quavering cry floating over the hushed forest, and was silent. The sleepy croak of a frog rose on the still air. And so the jungle sank to rest.

When the waning moon rose, about midnight, I staggered to my feet, and crept stiffly downhill to the cold raw valley, where the surface of a pool lay silver between black rocks. Wading in, I stood deep in its cooling waters, licking my wound clean.

After a deep draught and a roll in the damp sand I felt better, and stood listening. It was indeed good to live again—to feel once more the grand unbroken solitude of my native wilds—to smell the resinous perfume of the *salai* trees standing in their ghostly array up the hillside; to see the hills slumbering under the moon, and hear the jungle stir in its sleep—the distant call of some wakeful night-bird, or the rustle of a dried teak leaf, as it floated, twirling, lightly to the ground.

I did not fully recover from this day's trouble for many long weeks, and lost condition. It was difficult to get at the wound and keep it clean of flies and maggots.

I thought deeply also on the hind's bark that had worked so nearly fatally on my curiosity, and have since learned that the cry of our species can be fairly well imitated by

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the Korkus, who hold a leaf of the *palás* to their mouths and blow on it: this I have from my old pal Bhálu, the black one, whom I found the other morning digging out an ants' nest. We are good friends, and it is only during the *mhowa* season that our interests clash. Bhálu is quick-tempered, and when we see his shaggy coat moving at midnight under the *mhowa* trees and hear him sucking and slobbering over the luscious flowers, we know better than to poach on his preserves, although, after all, his angry demonstrations are little better than a pretence, and laughable at that. He keeps us merry too on moonlit nights, when he and Mrs. Bhálu fall out and wrangle, and the *gúbars*, the tiny screech-owls, wake to "chortle" and chuckle hideously as they sit demurely side by side in the branches overhead.

One more adventure, *sahib*, and I have done. It concerns those vile little foes of ours from whom there is seldom escape—the wild dogs. When I tell you that forest reservation has so increased their numbers that for every one during the old days there are now ten, and remind you that each pack, numbering about a dozen individuals, often more, must be fed and fed well, you will begin to understand the enormous losses inflicted on the herds of deer during a single season.

Increasing numbers have even altered the wild dog's retiring nature, and he now boldly appears where he would not have dared show himself a few years ago.

Sahib, you are steadily driving us from our home in these hills. Why is the grass never fired now, and why left to die down season after season till it cumbers the earth with such a mildewed and powdery carpeting as none but the rankest herbage may penetrate when the rain comes down? The bison are going, and we follow; and at no very distant time these hills will stand yet more desolate, deprived of all that once gladdened their solitude.

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I could tell you many another tale—of Dádu and Khátu, the Korkus, *shikáris* in the old days, but now—well, flesh is scarce in these regions, and in response maybe to a knowing look from the 'Jamadar *sahib*' they take their long *bandúks* from the thatch and enter the *bandi*. Sámbar,—whether stag, hind, or fawn, is good; but a fat young bison-cow—*wah!*

But the wild dogs!

It was at the end of the fierce summer drought, when the first premonitory storms had grumbled for some time over the hills and great violet-black masses of heavy rain-cloud came trailing up from the south-west. A fitful wind, moisture-laden, blew up the *khóra*, and the cool grey morning tempted me to loiter under the trees, which, in anticipation of their approaching function, had put forth a fresh head of green young leaves.

A light pattering sounded behind me. I turned in surprise to see the lean head of an old wild bitch quickly withdrawn in the grass! Then came a yap, and a scampering in the jungle; then another yap; and paralysed with fear for a moment, I laid my antlers craftily back and crept away at right angles. In vain! A long line of my fierce little hunters were extended in a fan, and overlapping me, were swiftly closing in!

Turning, I lumbered up the *khóra*, and, breaking into a panic-stricken gallop, glanced behind to see the horrid mute line of leaping, skulking red forms pouring from the woods in grim earnest.

What a chase! Climbing over spurs, dashing down the far side, scattering the clucking spur-fowl, bursting through the brittle jungle!

Once I sought to turn aside, but their flank was thrown swiftly forward, and headed me back. Realising that the easily loping brutes behind were driving me as they listed, I grew desperate and made a sudden dash for a side glen; at that the scraggy old bitch I had first seen came up

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with a rush, and her jaws closed like a vice on my belly; then, as I frantically plunged through some bamboos, she was torn away and flung off, the blood pouring from the red gash.

On I clattered over the boulders, among which there now began to trickle a thin muddy stream, and turning a bend, the fresh smell of rain-soaked earth struck my nostrils, as, carrying on its breath a distant peal of thunder, the first wild rush of the monsoon struck the groaning forest.

Large drops of rain met me as I laboured at a wearying gallop up the deep-cut ravine and at length sighted the refuge I had sought—a deep pool under a little ledge of basalt, over which now poured an ever-thickening stream of red, earth-stained water.

Into this I plunged, and turned in time to meet the leader of the pack, whom I struck under the water, my sharp forefoot cutting deep into his entrails. The rest surrounded me in an instant, finding their tongues for the first time and bursting into a chorus of savage, whining yelps. Twice was I borne down, madly striking right and left with antlers and feet, and twice I rose again, my cruel tormentors literally covering my bleeding form. The deepening, swirling pool was churned into yellow foam, the sharp snouts of the dogs showing here and there as they swam ashore and whined from the rocks, leaping out again to seize or be struck under.

At last down came the spate with a booming roar; and we were all caught up and hurled headlong downstream. My foes were swept away like corks, and I, with difficulty feeling ground, breasted the raging torrent an instant, and then dragged my harried body up the bank.

Yes, they were all gone, save a few that had followed down the opposite bank. Yet what was this? The drowned and battered carcase of one of them yet hung from my chest, his bared fangs closed in the grip of death! Shaking

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myself free, blind with a furious fear, I impaled the dead body, and pinned it to the bank again and again. Then I crawled under the lashing trees and disappeared in driving sheets of rain.

* * * * * *

Seat yourself on that rock, *sahib*, and let your gaze wander over my forests spread out below. That distant mist rising beyond those low grey-blue hills marks the deep-sunk valley of the Tapti; before you the rolling sea of jungle stretches unbroken to the horizon, and beyond it to the sources of the Narbada; while at your feet the bamboo-tangled mountain-side descends well-nigh sheer to that broad, shingly river-bed two thousand feet below, rising again to those lofty flat-topped sentinels beyond. The untiring voice of the green barbet floats up from the valley—"*Kotúru—kotúru!*" A jungle-cock sends his five clear notes into the calm evening air. The warm sky is full of the sunset gold.

And here I leave you. Farewell! and——"*Dhánk!*"

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MELURSUS "DIABOLICUS"

URSUS labiatus, alias *Melursus ursinus*, as he is now called, the common "sloth" bear of India, appears to be an animal of varied accomplishments and strange contradictory character.

Scarcely any two of the sportsmen to whom we are indebted for information regarding the habits of Indian game appear to be of one mind with respect to the temper and general bearing of this interesting quadruped in such dealings as he may have with man. A quiet, inoffensive vegetarian, say some—although this would hardly agree with the experiences of the forty-and-two children torn by the bears introduced to them by one Elisha—a poor old blundering buffoon of the woods, fleeing from a shadow, receiving his death wound with quiet resignation, and remonstrating with plaintive ululations alone; a nasty-tempered quarrelsome brute, say others; a persevering enemy that will not leave his victim the semblance of humanity, says the native.

It appears, however, that the character of this bear, with respect to man, depends largely on locality. On the Central India plateau he is an object of great dread to the native, more to be feared than any tiger or panther. Instances of his totally unprovoked attacks on human beings are here frequent. A belated villager, some poor creature squatting in the woods to gather the fallen flowers of the *mhowa* tree, the traveller pausing by some jungle pool—any of these will do. The face and head of the

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victim are almost invariably the favourite objective of this infernal brute, and he will not usually leave the poor flesh until it is difficult to tell to whom it once belonged. That this picture is not too highly coloured may be proved by anyone travelling in those parts. Gruesome objects—jawless, scalped horrors—are at the present moment to be seen in the hamlets of the forest region referred to. These are instances of the somewhat incomplete handiwork of *Melursus*.

Fewer accidents occur to the sportsman through the agency of bears than by that of felines. This is to be attributed to various reasons. *Melursus* is not so quick, and his armament is inferior to that of tiger or panther; the ground he chooses as his resort often abounds in points of vantage for the hunter on foot; his black coat will not permit him to hide in a handful of twigs. All this, added to the fact that some of our books on Indian sport make light of and poke fun at him, induces the ordinary sportsman to undertake operations against the "sloth" bear without, perhaps, that seriousness which would accompany his actions when tackling more dangerous game.

However, it is a dangerous thing to underrate one's adversary, and nasty, sometimes fatal accidents have before now occurred to sportsmen, who have discovered too late that the so-called sloth or "honey" bear can on occasion wake up, and attack with remarkable vigour, inflicting wounds as severe, though not so septically dangerous, as those dealt by the *felidæ*.

She-bears of this variety, especially those with cubs, are apparently the offenders in most cases of unprovoked assault; although it is the writer's experience that, when wounded, bears have been more aggressive as a rule than similarly wounded felines.

Bear stories are so common, and have figured so largely in tales of Indian sport, that in sympathy with the reader one is inclined to cry "Halt!" But the narrative of an

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extraordinary escape that befell the writer on an occasion when he found himself fairly in the clutches of one of these black, hairy, yelling brutes is too tempting to pass by.

As has been hinted at, there was a time when he held but scant respect for *Melursus;* but up to that date it had not been his privilege to make acquaintance with the sub-family "*diabolicus*."

It was during a singularly ill-chosen expedition to a certain district of the Central Provinces that once bore a great name as a hunting-ground that camp was pitched not far from a rocky range of sandstone hills named "Chitra-Kátra." Thither the writer found himself riding out at dawn one morning in the merrie month of May. The men had gone on overnight, and were to watch the hillsides from before daylight for the bears which I was assured I should find.

I should hasten to make it plain that, owing to domestic and parental responsibilities, my methods of *shikár* have to be tempered with a due regard to the avoidance of a too intimate or personal acquaintance with wild beasts in their live and kicking state. A "foot" *shikári*, of the tree-and-rock-roosting species, I had hitherto gone scatheless through numerous episodes—some tame, others exciting—all, happily, without harm to any of the people accompanying me—which had imbued me with a cocksureness that ordinary prudence was all that was required to justify me in assuring those anxious for my welfare that no risks could or would be run.

On reaching the foot of Chitra-Kátra hill at sunrise, a distant whistle and vigorous beckoning brought me scrambling happily to the top, where I was informed that a large she-bear with a cub had been seen ascending the hill, and that she had, just before my arrival, disappeared behind some rocks half-way down the hillside. Creeping along, I met the other *shikári*, and was joined by two of my own men with rifle and gun.

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A consultation elicited the information that there were same caves below those rocks. I then went cautiously forward, and found myself on top of a long terrace of perpendicular sandstone, about twenty feet high, running along the face of the hill. At the foot of this cliff came a narrow ledge, and below this again a sloping face of smooth rock that, becoming ever steeper, at length dropped over the edge of another cliff. At the bottom of this lower cliff was a mass of big boulders, and thorny jungle crept up thus far from the surrounding woods.

I had previous experience of she-bears, which I had known to come viciously charging up fifty yards of rocky hillside for nothing at all but the sound of a human voice; so I stood quietly there to elaborate some scheme by which the old lady might be "drawn" without compromising anybody's safety. As I did so, I heard a bear snuffling and grunting, about a hundred yards off, nearer the foot of the hill; so I ran on tiptoe along the rocks to find that the beast, which had evidently become suspicious, was making off into the jungled plain below. I followed the noises for about half an hour without coming up with the bear, then lost them, and returned to the hill, rating the *shikáris* for not having marked the game down with greater accuracy.

Since only one bear had been seen, and the hill and caves had been watched from before dawn, it was natural to conclude that that bear was the one I had heard going away, and that the caves were therefore vacant: so I came climbing up in a slanting direction, and joined the men; after which we all clambered on to the narrow ledge before described and began looking for marks along it, out of mere curiosity to see the place.

I had quite given up all hope of any sport that morning, and was ruminating on the shockingly gameless condition of the country in which I had already wasted a useless fortnight. I went slowly along the ledge, followed

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by the *shikáris* and men, looking into little scooped-out recesses below the perpendicular face of sandstone, and under the impression that there was no hiding-place sufficient for a bear. The *shikáris*, local men, were now of opinion that there *was* no cave here.

After a time, however, there came a corner, round which curved the ledge we were following, and on passing this I suddenly found myself in front of a large low-roofed cave.

At the far end of this antechamber, into which the morning sun shone brightly, were two dark apertures leading into the bowels of the hill. On the sandy floor of the entrance to the cave were the fresh ingoing marks of a bear—and none leading out.

We had halted, I suppose, for a few seconds, and I had let fall a word or two, in a low tone, to the effect that a bear was there all right and it was no place for us.

Next to me was the local Gónd *shikári*, and behind him a young Ját non-commissioned officer of my regiment; while another of my men had been posted on the terrace above us to act as a "look-out."

Our position was a sufficiently hazardous one from the nature of the surroundings, as will be noted by a glance at the sketch of the episode—itself copied from a photograph secured during a subsequent visit to the scene of disaster. It did not take very long for a mental appreciation of that situation to form itself, and the next moment we were quietly retracing our way.

Round the corner whence we had come was a little room for expansion, so to speak, where the precarious ledge widened slightly, and formed a kind of niche or platform overhung by rock. For this vantage ground we were now making; and, had we reached it, I think that bear might, with a fair amount of certainty, have been defeated and precipitated into the depths below. But—unfortunately there was a "but" in the case—scarcely had we taken one

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step in retrogression when a horrible subterranean disturbance occurred in the depths of the cavern we had just left.

This accelerated our movements somewhat; but they were as nothing compared to the rapidity of the eruption that was going on behind us, as the bear came yelling and scrambling out of the innermost portion of the cavern, and in less than no time a disgusting outcry belched forth from the dark opening in the face of sheer rock, and a furious bellowing announced that the brute was on us. So close were we to our little haven round the corner that my own man had already arrived; but for those in rear of him—time was up! The Gónd leapt like any ape up some narrow cleft just ahead of me; while for me there was nothing but a swift whip round to face this horrid dénouement, my rifle not even permitted to reach my shoulder. To right—a blank wall of smooth cliffside; to left—a swift descent to the unknown over the edge of a slope scarcely less sudden than that of an ordinary church steeple; and in front—a raging, roaring mass of black hair, shooting towards me with the speed of a runaway motor-car.

Bang! goes my rifle right into and touching the brute's back—and next moment I am enjoying a strange, slow-moving nightmare, one of the most vivid of its kaleidoscopic memories being the peculiarly smooth-brushed appearance of *Melursus*' forehead as her jaws close on my right thigh, and seem to remain there for ages!

Then, curiously enough, I am upside down; and everything whirls round and round in a freak-like dance! Through clenched teeth I remember breathing some desperate remark, such as—"Done for, *this* journey!"—"Booked *all* the way!"—as with fingers gripped tight in that harsh long black hair, or clutching with tearing nails at elusive rock-slopes, we bump and whirl swiftly downwards—instinctive ideas of the cliff that awaited us darting through my whirring brain.

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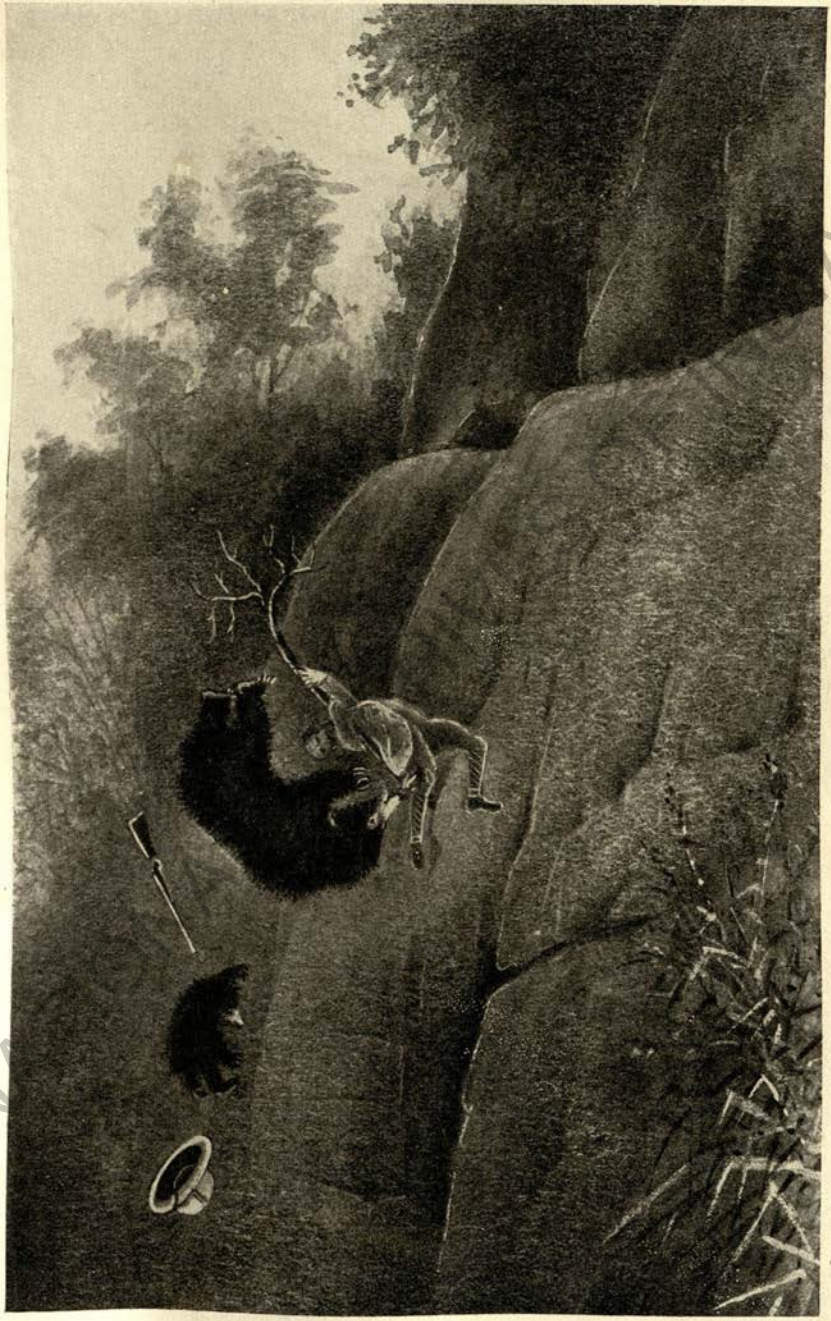

THERE CAME A SUDDEN SHOCK

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To a certain extent a kind of semi-unconsciousness then seems to have supervened; for it appeared to be quite a long time after this that there came a sudden shock, and a numb sensation seized my back and side. In a sort of mist I saw the shaggy body of the bear hurled far from me into space; and then there came a distant deep thud, and, after it, a faint rattling crash—ah! my poor dear rifle, that was you, was it not?

Slowly I became conscious that I was clutching something; things seemed all anyhow. Then I became aware that it was a little tree that was gripped in the strength of despair, and that I was hanging on to it, head downwards, on the face of the cliff itself!

My Ját orderly's voice soon sounded in my ear. "*Arré! Bhagwán! Bhagwán!*"—I heard him pant. "*Bach-gaya! Bach-gaya!*" ("Escaped! escaped!") The plucky fellow had crawled down that awful slope, having in the first place, ere ascending the fatal hill, luckily enough happened to remove his shoes. And now he managed to seize one of my hands, I was somehow drawn upwards, and, getting on to the curve of the slope, was assisted up to the ledge, where I sat down.

My first thought, I must confess, was "Bear!" and a weight seemed suddenly lifted off my chest as I realised that the brute would find it impossible to reach me again. Instantly a feeling of resentment supervened, bitter and cruel in its intensity, and, as my eyes fell angrily on the jungle below, I eagerly stretched out a hand for my weapon. But alas! had I not heard its splintering crash in that terrible fall?

Then it was that my gaze fell on one tiny, solitary tree —less than a sapling—that clung to the cliffside. And I thought of bears no more, seized with a silent amazement at that miraculous escape.

That little branch, no thicker than a man's ankle, but of wondrous toughness, rooted in some mere chink in the

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rock, was the only break in all the smooth face of sandstone around. There was no other tree within many yards. Ever since its chance seed germinated in that minute niche had it grown towards the fulfilment of a noble mission, and behold to-day the realisation thereof!

Flourish there, little lonely tree! Swing in naught but caressing breezes from thy sun-kissed root-hold; and would that they might all be moisture-laden! Increase and multiply thy grateful spreading boughs! But this is not thy destiny—for 'tis only an obscure little stunted jungle bush called *Bhiria*, whose name I would set big on a scroll of honour.

Remembering now that the bear had seized me, and that I seemed to have no right leg at all when I crawled back to safety, I glanced down. . . .

It should be noted that absolutely no sense of pain had accompanied my late adventure. It was therefore with a kind of humorous incredulity that I stared at what met my astounded gaze—the thin shooting breeches hanging in gory tatters round a limb that was soaked in blood from groin to ankle!

Off came the breeches, and the marvel only grew. One—two—three—four great holes in my leg—my own good right leg! It seemed incredible. I wiped away what obscured the wounds, and felt their gaping edges with at first gentle, then bolder fingers. I gauged their depth with probing fingers, lifting up in my curiosity a flap of tunnelled muscles; and still no pain of any kind!—which seemed extraordinary, the injuries being such as would call up feelings of sickening apprehension if viewed inflicted on another person. I uncorked my water-bottle of clean boiled water, and directed its stream from some height into the ragged apertures; examined them again, cleaned them out, and bound the leg round with a pocket-handkerchief and strips of *pagri* cloth—and I never felt fitter in all my life!

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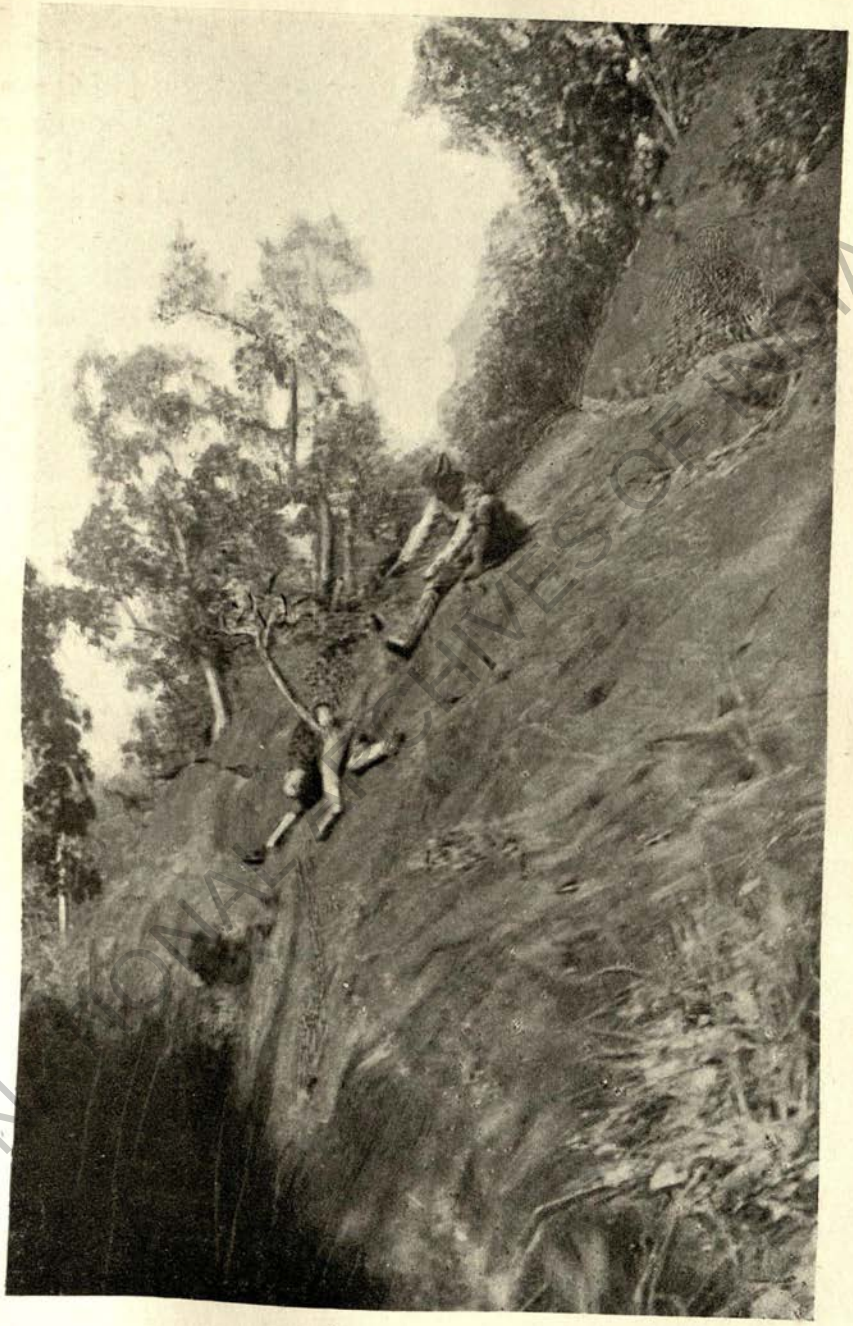

THE RESCUE

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The Ját, Mulloo, was meanwhile regaling the party with a vivid description of the catastrophe, and his solemn round eyes and broad-mouthing speech so tickled me, as he explained, with very illustrative gestures, how I had fallen forwards, and, fixing my hands in its shaggy coat, mounted that howling, horrified bear, before, accompanied by our satellites the hat, rifle, and little bear, we had gone revolving down, that I leant back and roared with a laughter that went a long way in allaying the fears of the faithful fellows attending me.

The only now practicable way off the hill was *past the cave again*, and down a rough mass of boulders, and sufficiently arduous it was indeed. Meanwhile the *shikári*, who had gone down to pick up the pieces of my rifle, brought up the carcase of the bear cub, with my bullet-hole in its forehead. The little brute, clinging to its mother's shaggy shoulders, had intercepted or at least set up the bullet considerably. Whether the she-bear got any of it is not known. She went slowly off round a spur of the hill, halting twice *en route*, say the men.

Camp, six miles off, was reached at last on a stretcher made of two poles and a *pagri*. Here to my concern it was found that most of the perchloride of mercury mixture I had brought with me had leaked from the glass-stoppered bottle; but a little was left, and, making up the solution, I washed and syringed out the wounds, now for the first time feeling faint from pain.

A blazing day of roaring hot winds, spent under the little mango trees at Sátaldéhi, was succeeded by a calm cool night, and I was carried ten miles farther. By this time my back had stiffened from my fall of the morning, and it was impossible to obtain rest for a moment, nor could I, though incessantly sitting up and lying down again, draw breath without pain. To ease the back I tried to turn on my side; but at that such a cramp seized the lacerated muscles of the thigh that the horrified bearers of

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my bed almost dropped me at the sharp expletive which rose involuntarily to the sky.

All next day was spent at a roadside bungalow: the wounds had glazed over and swollen, and it was necessary to open them up and dress them again, which at last I forced myself to do with my penknife. At night came torture at the hands of the little native assistant-surgeon summoned to treat me. A night of morphia-induced slumber, and twenty-five miles more, on the bed, brought me to a small civil station, a friend in need, and comparative rest—comparative, for here came chloroform and an operation. Though a mauling by a bear is not so dangerous as one inflicted by a carnivorous animal, there was considerable apprehension of pyæmia setting in; but the fact of being in hard condition averted that dangerous complication.

In one single bite the bear, seizing the leg sidewise, had made all her four canine teeth almost meet. In that wound practically all the muscles of the lower part of the front of the thigh were involved; and a considerable portion of them, forming a dangerous flap, had to be subsequently removed by the surgeon's knife. One fang penetrated to and almost severed the very tubing in which runs the femoral artery.

Two months on one's back, surrounded by hospital smells, afforded scope for thought; and in reviewing the affair the following points suggested themselves.

In the first place, the unlucky position that placed me so completely at that bear's disposal was one of sheer deception.

Secondly, as the bear had some yards in which to get up a rattling pace and a sharp curve round which to approach me, completely under cover until within a few feet, it was impossible to stop her in time. Indeed, had I brained her, she must have got me once, somewhere, being straight head-on to me and coming so fast. The

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only thing that could have averted a catastrophe would have been a projectile of sufficient energy at once to overcome, arrest, and throw back her energy of, say, 250 lbs. travelling at 25 miles per hour; and it is not possible to carry field artillery everywhere!

So far, we see, all the luck was on the side of the wild beast; but when she seized me the conditions were reversed. The bear caught me where I could best afford it—the big muscles in front of the thigh.

Again, the precarious foothold saved me. Our impact and my fall on her back upset the brute, and our subsequent rapid descent of the rock-slope prevented her from loosing her grip and seizing me again; it would doubtless have been my face and head then!

After that the tree!

Interposed, by a truly extraordinary piece of luck, in the small of my back—the only place to stop my whirling descent—it saved me doubly; for had I possibly escaped death by falling, the bear, finding me still with her, would undoubtedly have polished me off in her own hideous way.

The melancholy forebodings of a "dot-and-carry-one" action, and those horrid-looking boots with the ultra-Parisian heels, were fortunately not realised; and so wonderful are the recuperative powers of the human frame that the leg is almost as good as new. But the lesson has been worth the learning. Bhálú may be a vegetarian: but to presuppose a general mildness of temperament thereby seems misguided, and hardly good enough.

Most of the above account was written while still a sufferer from the effects of the untimely meeting with *Melursus*, with the events of that unlucky day still fresh in the memory. The subject was therefore treated, perhaps, more vividly than would have been the case after a lapse of time; and the writer, undesirous of causing offence to

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incredulous persons by adding to the already extraordinary story of an almost miraculous escape, refrained from mentioning certain peculiar coincidences that accompanied it. Since, however, even the abridged version has met with playful expressions of scepticism on the part of more than one reviewer, it seems that there is little to be attained by further reticence.

On the way to the jungles in which he later came to grief, the writer had diverged from his route in order to pay a visit to his birthplace, which happened to lie in the vicinity.

In Indian "stations" or cantonments it is the custom to retain certain houses as the residences of the various civil and military officials, and these become known for all time as "the General's house," "the Civil Surgeon's bungalow," and so forth. There was therefore no difficulty in locating the residence of the Deputy-Commissioner, which was still standing unchanged, nor in unearthing what personally interesting information was sought—by dint of questioning old servants, *chaprasis*, and pensioned native subordinates. Even the room in which the writer had first seen light was pointed out by a shaky old man who, probably with a view to rupees, claimed the supreme felicity of having once officiated in the honourable capacity of nursemaid.

When the patient completed his painful journey of forty miles on the bed and, reaching the local headquarters, was carried to the house of the friend in need—who happened to be the then Deputy-Commissioner—he found himself comfortably installed in the selfsame room which had once resounded to his infantile cries—a coincidence which aroused the gravest doubts as to his recovery in the minds of his superstitious attendants, especially as a premature effort to transport him seventy miles across country to his own place resulted in a severe relapse and a second return to the apparently fateful chamber.

The civil station referred to is Bétúl, situated in the

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Hoshangabad division of the Central Provinces; and poor Pelham Rogers, whose kindness on that occasion can never be forgotten, himself fell a victim to a wounded tiger next year, the date of the fatality falling, by some strange fate, on the exact anniversary of the writer's own minor experience with the bear.

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PAKHAL NADDI OF THE PALM TREES

THE literature of hog-hunting is already so complete, and has been dealt with by such past masters in the sport itself as well as in its portrayal, that the subject is to be approached with the greatest diffidence. All that can be said on this grand, engrossing hunting topic must needs savour too much of what has gone before; and yet reminiscences of bygone days at "Junglypur" would be incomplete without some reference to the opportunities which the old place afforded us of indulging in this very quintessence of the hunter's sport.

Hog-hunting played a great part in the woodland sports of ancient England, if we are to judge by the preponderance of the 'boare,' the 'wylde swyne,' in the hunting pictures and poetry of a certain period of those olden days. The lines of Chaucer and of other contemporary poets testify to the hunter's joy in partaking of what was evidently considered the "blue riband" of that old-time *shikár*—his pride and boast of conquest over the "fearsome tuskyd beaste."

In the lay of "Syr Eglamoure of Artoys" (dated 1570) we have a wonderfully spirited account of hog-hunting three hundred and thirty years ago, which will show pig-stickers of to-day that there is little "new under the sun":—

Syr Eglamoure wened well to do,
With a speare he rode him to,
As fast as he myghte ryde.
Or yf he rode never so fast,
The good speare asonder brast,
It wolde not in the hyde.

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From which we fear that Syr Eglamoure had failed to keep his hog-spear keen, as all good pig-stickers should.

> That boare dyd him wo ynoughe,
> His good horse under him he sloughe,
> On foot than must he bide!

However, Syr Eglamoure had a second weapon on which to fall back—"hys good swerde"—and so probably fared better than would the hog-hunter of the present day, when—

> On foot than must he bide.

Shakespeare's Venus foretells the death of her Adonis should he encounter with the "boare"—

> —with iaveling's point a churlish swine to goare,
> Whose tushes, never sheathed, he whetteth still,
> Like to a mortall butcher bent to kill.
> His brawnie sides with hairie bristles armed
> Are better proof than thy spear's point can enter
> . . . . . .
> Being irefull on the lyon he will venter.

So when we are told that pig-sticking in India was evolved from bear-spearing, and that its superiority was not discovered till the supply of bears had run out, we cannot restrain an exclamation of doubt. It does not seem likely that the earliest Indian pig-stickers would have required such guiding towards a sport of their ancestors; besides which, hog-hunting was already recognised and indulged in by the chiefs of Hindostán.

Long years though they be since the "wylde swyne" dwelt in English copses, those fortunate enough may still enjoy his pursuit in this land of their adoption. We whose lines were cast awhile at "Junglypur" were lucky enough to get the sport first hand from nature—so to speak—at our very doors; and, above all, without that much-to-be-deplored expenditure which has gone far to bring pig-sticking towards the level of Indian racing.

Our hog-hunting cost us nothing—no two-thousand-rupee

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racehorses—no heavy tent-club mess bills. But we got our pig!

As the rider canters over the level cultivated plains four miles due west of Junglypur, there rises to meet him, over long stretches of cotton and millet, a line of nodding, slender-necked date-palms, their drooping plumes hanging above the tangled coverts of a little stream known as the "Pakhal Naddi."

The name of this beautiful piece of pig-covert is perhaps derived from the word *pakhál*, meaning a *bhisti's* waterbag; and a happy simile it is, for the stream watering it may aptly be likened to a never-failing *massak*. Throughout the driest hot-weather season its springs well forth in the midst of a parched and dusty plain, and break away in a deep cool stream, meandering over a muddy bed from pool to pool, the still, dark depths of which reflect the graceful overhanging forms of shady boughs.

This covert is extremely thick, and of the kind known so well to Deccan hog-hunters as a *sendhibund*, where the undergrowth is largely composed of dwarf date bushes, intermingled with *lantána* and *karúnda*, and where impenetrable masses of dense green creepers, encouraged by the moisture-soaked soil, swarm tumultuously up the highest palms, flinging thick canopies of verdure over their drooping plumes, and smothering the underwood in an all-pervading embrace. Hard by, irrigated by little channels led off the main stream, are several betel-nut, sugar-cane, and other gardens, affording a cover scarcely less secure than the palm *nála* itself; the whole, in sooth, forming a retreat calculated to lull the most suspiciously inclined poker with soft dreams of high feeding and undisturbed peace.

We first essayed our luck with the denizens of the Pakhal Naddi not long after our first arrival at Junglypur—now many years ago—and since few of us had ever before been able to indulge in the glorious sport, our methods would have horrified anyone accustomed to an orderly

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tent-club way of conducting affairs. Most of us had yet to blood our virgin spears, and it was on this our first day "every man for himself and the devil for the hindmost." We were accompanied by a motley rabble of dogs, both small and great—hounds and mongrels, terriers and long-legged lurcher-like brutes, which one of our number termed his "greyhounds." All the same, we had no sooner entered a scrubby fallow patch *en route* to the Pakhal Naddi one early morning than the fun began.

Aroused by the annoying yap-yapping of a diminutive fox-terrier at his ear, a good boar rose from a grass patch, and made for an adjoining bit of garden cultivation, whereat a hubbub arose that baffles description. Strong men yelled, spears flashed in dangerous proximity to neighbours' ribs, bushes crashed, hedges burst asunder, "greyhounds" were trodden on, ridden over, and wailed vociferously, and the main body of the pursuers, gathering strength as it went, hustled off after the pig; while, in quite another direction, a somewhat timorous individual, who had been persuaded to accompany us on the ground that it was the right thing to pig-stick, was to be seen, pale as death, balancing precariously on the neck of his country-bred mare, as he was swept away over the yet misty fields into, apparently, the *ewigkeit*.

What an uproar there was in that garden patch where the perplexed pig took refuge as the storm of hoofs swept o'er him! Full of little irrigation drains, tall castor-oil plants, and various other garden products, it was not long ere stirrup-leathers were being torn from saddles and excited sportsmen deposited in more or less damp spots with a celerity that spoke volumes for the efficacy of the entanglements. "Where is he? where is he?" gasped a hunter, who was pale with hurry, and at whose belt hung various knives and other lethal weapons. "Where is he?" we bellowed, in English and the vernacular, to the scandalised and horror-stricken tender of the garden land, who stood

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on one leg, with his hands joined despairingly, as we swept through the lush vegetation.

A howl, and a small white terrier flung into the air from a bush, put us on the track once more, and this first of "first spears" was scored by a lucky jab downwards, as the boar rushed with a vicious lunge right and left between our horses' legs. "Ware blind wells!" we yell, and the chase is resumed, to merge finally into a furiously struggling mass of stamping hoofs, angry grunts, and upraised spear-shafts, where the harried pig, gnawing a fetlock or two and desperately fighting to rise, gives up the ghost with evident relief and, in the spirit, is fled from the horrible inferno which, in the body, he could not escape.

Our local "cowboy" now dismounted, and, despite remonstrances, "killed" the already dead boar several times over by inserting a large species of knife into the limp carcase.

Being the first time we had worked the Pakhal Naddi, the ground was more or less unknown to us, and a good pig got away, unseen, in the direction of the Chandrabhága—a river that comes down from the hills about a couple of miles to the west, which was the nearest haven of security for pigs driven from the Pakhal.

There now ensued a long period of inaction and patient waiting. In time, however, the faint popping of *kawlt* bombs and the crack of blank cartridge sounded nearer, mingled with the music of kerosene tins; and after a while the bushes parted, close to where I had been posted with another spear — H. — and an enormous grey pig emerged, halted, eyed us an instant, and with a "humph!" of churlish disgust turned and trotted coolly along the covertside, to disappear again into its shelter as he made off upstream. He was shortly followed by a fine black boar, a shade bigger if anything, who pursued the same casual tactics with even less hurry. However, they must have put on the pace after this, for a few seconds later

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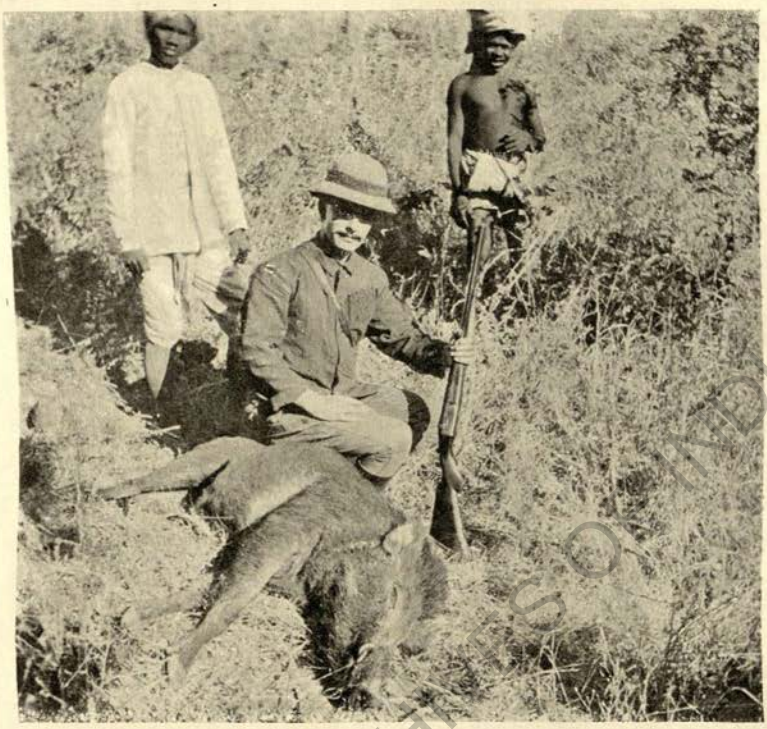
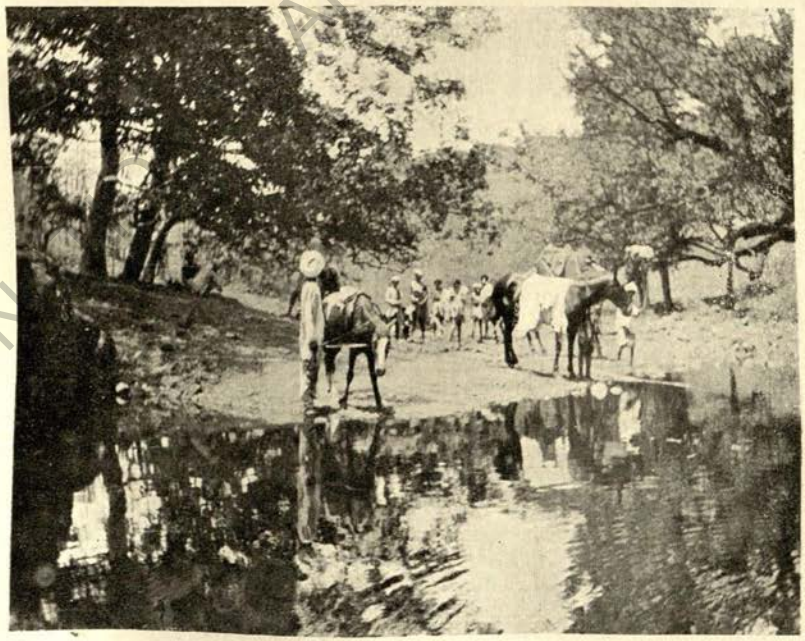


A HILL BOAR



WATERING THE PONIES

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two natives, who had been cutting brushwood, quite two hundred yards away, rushed from the *nála* in suppliant attitudes; and we understood thereby that the pigs were taking a line straight away through the *nála* for the now familiar Chandrabhága. Crossing the stream at a little clearing therefore, H. went up the far side, while I trotted up mine: the others had taken up unlucky positions and could not be seen.

Near the head of the *sendhibund*, where it ceased and the ordinary dry *samalu*-bushed watercourse began, I halted, concealed myself, and awaited events; but my luck was out, for the boars did not come out so far up, and I shortly spied two rapidly moving objects half a mile away, and made out H. riding a big pig single-handed.

To gallop across the shingle and set the mare going in this direction was the work of a moment; and, my mount being fresh, I rapidly approached the scene of action, just too late however, for, as we forged alongside, H. scored first spear—a bit "abaft o' the mizzen" however, and the boar, the heaviest I had yet seen, and evidently our black acquaintance of a few minutes before, jinked across my front. Gallantly the little mare responded, and, with a bound forward, the spear-point entered behind the small ribs, high up, and stood out from his brawny chest. None of us were rich in spears in those early days, so, fearing a smash, I let go; and the pig, with the magic wand swaying from his flank, charged H., missed his horse, stumbled, recovered desperately, stumbled again, and fell on his knees, to sink slowly with a sigh on his side and roll up the whites of his game little eyes—dead.

Meanwhile a more animated scene was being enacted nearer covert.

A big boar, so fat that he had only cantered a short distance into the open before lying up in wrath under a bush, had been attacked; but, in spite of several severe wounds, had cut one horse and regained the shelter of the

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thick *nála*. As we arrived on the scene he had just made good his retreat downstream, leaving a beater nursing his thigh, down which there trickled a thin red stain; while, further on, a rider more rash than the rest had fallen, horse and all, over a steep bank, and had just been propped up, gazing vacantly into space. However, a bottle of soda-water soon pulled him round.

An uproar arising still further downstream, we hurried thither, and found the old pig, weak from loss of blood, standing behind some thick bushes. Edging round, I found him facing me down a tiny path in the jungle, his small eyes blazing with fury, and drew up the mare and lowered the spear-point none too soon, for, instantly making up his mind, and acting on his resolution like the good pig he was, out he came. Had he been fresher, I fear there would have been good reason to bewail the folly of trying to take a charge at the halt, as it was only by thrusting downwards, with all the strength at my command, that I kept him down as he passed under the mare's belly, and *crack!* went the stout bamboo shaft, snapping in two just above the blade, as a rustle behind told us he had regained his sanctuary.

This boar was never found, although we had the covert hunted through for him next day, and so must be added to the list of "wounded and got away."

The beat being resumed, was carried out to the end of the palm grove. Partridges whirred by in numbers; a jackal came slinking out and loped away across the open; and, at the last moment, a big sounder of sows and squeakers broke, and sped off in a long line northwards.

This brought our morning's sport to a close, and cantering down past the *pán* gardens, there—a welcome sight—stood the tent, with the white figures of servants flitting about preparing the breakfast to which we were soon doing ample justice, amid the popping of soda-water and

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the gurgling of well-earned "pegs." Cheroots and a chat, and the opening meet of the Junglypur Tent Club broke up, as we drove off home the four miles to cantonments.

Many a capital morning or afternoon did we enjoy here —and many a blank day, too—the proceedings often graced by the presence of the ladies of the station. The sport that we had been led to believe was to be had with the pig in other parts of the surrounding country never came up to our expectations however. In spite of capital bits of cover here and there, a very mistaken policy had filled every hamlet with licensed guns, and it was only regular strongholds like the Pakhal Naddi that could defy the systematic poaching of village *shikáris* and professional netters.

As I have already hinted, one day's hog-hunting *reads* very like another; so, in perplexity, one turns from the difficulties of prose to the snare of blank verse. It is by no means the first time that the metre of Longfellow's *Hiawatha* has been murdered in adaptation, so apologies are perhaps superfluous.

The last time I saw the old Pakhal four good pigs were laid out in a row by the mess tent. Under the soft drooping foliage of the big tamarind trees by the ruined *fakir's* tomb, the good horses were being rubbed down, preparatory to being led home. The declining sun touched the surrounding fields with gold.

As we finished our "pegs," lit up cheroots, and got into the dogcart, I took a last look at the long line of gracefully posed palms, now standing out black and sharp against the flaming western sky, in the quiet evening air. A moment later we swung round a bend in the road, and with a sigh realised that the Pakhal was a memory of the past!

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PAKHAL NADDI OF THE PALM TREES

AIR—(Bazár 'tom-toms')—"*Rumpi-tumpi-tumpi-tum*"

In the Plain beneath the Mountains,
Mountains seven, wild Sátpúras,
wells a rivulet—the Pakhal—
Pakhal Naddi of the palm trees.
Palm trees nodding o'er the copses;
copses full of creeper tangle;
tangle drooping ever downwards,
drooping, green, to kiss the surface,
surface of dark, placid Pakhal!

Darksome are those slimy thickets,
thickets of the Pakhal Naddi.

Waning moon not long since risen,
yellow o'er the eastern levels,
shimmers faint on winding covert,
covert sleeping soft, where crickets,
crickets, *cicadæ*, are trilling.

O'er the fields a solemn silence,
silence of the coming gilding,
green and golden, of the morning,
to eye-rubbing, yawning, waking,
stirring, waking Mother Nature.
Trembles higher star of morning;
grows soft light ere first false dawning;
stir the birds, cry "*Chee!*" in brambles;
dim lie fields beyond the brambles—
bare reaped fields beyond the brambles—
Where the grey and fleeting shadows,
prowling jackal, foul hyæna,
slink before compelling fingers—
first pale fingers of the morning.

From the trees beyond the river
flutes the *koël—koël* fluty;
scream they, early flying parrots;
stream they, arrow-like, o'erhead to
join their fellows mid the *bér* trees.
Partridge wakes—"*Ka-teetur; teetur!*"

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Antelopes, capricious moving,
yellow flanks turn towards the morning.
Far o'er furrow, through *palâti*—
dry-stalked, cotton-picked *palâti*—
comes a slowly moving darkness;
darkness growing ever nearer,
twining, halting, crackling, snuffing;
darkness of suspicious bodies,
bodies of suspicious darkness,
looming ever bigger, nearer,
till the snouts of snuffling "*dookers*,"
"*dookers?*"—pigs they, wild, of jungle—
snuff and gruntle slowly onwards.
Piggies full of sweet potatoes,
stolen sweetstuffs, luscious juices!
luscious they—the cane-stored juices,
slobbered canes of luscious sugar,
crunched up by the teeth of piggies,
in that field beyond the river!
Lean sows grunting to their hoglets,
small brown hoglets squealing answer;
youthful boars assuming graces,
graceless pranks they ne'er had tried on
were he present—Grey-Boar, master!
Sterns retreating, tails a-twitching,
passes on the champing sounder,
sounder of the jungle "*dookers*,"
seeking shelter mid the Pakhal.
Entering the prickly covert,
covert closing tight behind them,
covert smiling in the sunshine,
level rays of dawning sunshine,
showing ne'er a sign of piggies,
innocent it smiles. Of "*dookers*"
what does it know? Peaceful Pakhal!
In the distance sounds a thudding,
cantering of useful "tattoos";
ponies carry *sahibs* to hunting,
canter on till, dust subsiding,
sees them drawing rein o'er yonder

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under tamarinds so shady,
where the hunters—Arab—Waler—
switch their tails, by syces tended.
Thither, too, the scouts repairing,
Shortly see hog-hunters issue—
(champing curb-chain, glancing spear-tip)
cross the fields o'er, pass the ford by,
some to right and some to left hand
(and a couple with the beaters).
Roosting, like some mangy vulture,
in the branches of a *bábul*—
thorny tree that wild acacia!—
sits a figure—stands a figure—
ape-like gibbers mid the branches,
branches of the thorny *bábul*;
pointing, beckoning—beckoning, pointing,
joins dusk hands before the *sahib*,
points into the Pakhal's shelter.
"There he lies, the horrid *sooar!*
Oh! the rascal—Ah! the villain—
may his destiny be evil,
and his female relatives all,
nose-clipped hussies, may they shamed be!
See! The swine came from the sugar,
sugarcane of my own planting,
trampling—crushing—masticating,
night-long ravages in champing!
When the *sahibs* were changing horses,
burst he all my fence asunder,
passed he thence into that thicket—
thicket of the Pakhal Naddi.
Where yon mango tree's dark shadow
falls aslant the prickly palm-brake
lies he daily—cursed '*dooker!*'
See! I call my fellow-toilers
(hasten Bápoo! hurry Ráma!)
and, to aid your honour's hunting,
join with them your beaters yonder."
In the thickest of the covert,
e'en at midday, fall but rarely,

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BURSTING FROM THE PRICKLY COVERT

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chequered patterns of a sunlight
filtering through the verdure arching,
glancing rare on placid pool-face.
There the branches—very scratchy—
of the prickliest sort of *sendhi*,
trailing downwards, form a bower,
sweep the earth with lowered lance-points.
'Neath this haven, ploughed and furrowed,
soft-tossed earth—the moistest, coolest
resting-place for grey-boar lazy.
Grey-boar stretched out on his belly,
hind legs trailing, snout soft "nuzzling,"
snuff on sniff and sidewise "nuzzling,"
turning up damp soil luxurious—
comfort for a sleepy piggy!
Not too near that nagging party—
lean sow nagging, hoglet squeaking—
Peaceful dreams of nightly visits,
long night visits to the sugar,
sugarcane or sweet-potato,
carrot yellow, onion juicy.
Not one earthly care he careth.
Not one enemy he feareth
finger's snap for. Panther, tiger,
when they mark him, cat-like, make as
though they failed at all to see him;
feign some previous engagement!
Grey-boar, therefore, scarcely stirreth
sleepy eyelid, ear slow twitching,
when a distance-mellowed clamour—
throb of *tom-tom*, howl of beater—
wafts so faintly on the breezes,
breezes balmy of the morning;
but, in somnolence, contemptful,
grunts he, on his side reclining—
"Nasty little shrill mosquitoes!
how you bother with your pinging!"
'Length the beat, a corner turning,
coming near the likeliest covert,
swells out to a diapason,

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swells the dusky throats of beaters.
Pops the squib! *bang—bangs!* blank cartridge!
Rattle empty tins from Baku!
Thwack with bamboo, poke with bamboo,
Hoo! the "*dooker*"—Ha! the "*dooker*"—
rout him out, the tusky "*dooker*"!
See! On down-curved wing comes whizzing
driven partridge, bush-quail screeching;
wheels scared nightjar; shrieks the lapwing;
halts the lobbing hare, upsitting,
hearkens to the din behind him.
Then the bushes, gently shaking,
part, and void the motley sounder:
lean sows grunting to their hoglets,
hoglets hurrying swiftly after,
hurry past the prickly arbour—
Grey-boar's green and shady harbour.
Grey-boar, on his side extended,
hind legs draws up, eyebrow raises,
raises up his mighty headpiece,
meditates in formidable
bristly-whiskered indignation—
"What a most unseemly hooting!
tins a-rattling, horns a-tooting!
(Hoo? the '*dooker*'—Ha? the '*dooker*')—
why, I ask you, such a hurry?"
"Gone! my swift stampeding sounder!
fled the hare, and flown the partridge!"
(Sudden sounds a shriller screaming—
"Oh! I see him! Ah! I see him.")
"Really this is too outrageous!
What about a dart among the
dusky shins of yelling beaters?"
Bangs! a sudden bomb behind him—
stinging, reeking, vile saltpetre—
helps to make his stubborn mind up.
Grey-boar surly walks from covert,
leaves his enemies a bouquet—
scarcely that of rose or lily—
odour of the bristly "*dooker*"!—

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passes down those aisles o'er-arching
Pakhal Naddi of the palm trees.
Where a little knoll uprising,
bush-encumbered, palm-frond studded,
gives a view towards the westward—
westward to the Chandrabhága—
shingly-bedded Chandrabhága—
lurk the hunters, hidden almost,
flashing spear-tip, hidden almost;
hidden quite the Arab, Waler,
ears a-twitch and bits a-champing,
waiting grace of Pakhal Naddi.
Hark! The distant throb of drumming!
(tighten chin-strap, grasp the spear-haft)
anxious watch yon covert, prickly
covertside of prickly Pakhal.
See him there! our brother-hunter—
Rufus of the scanty top-knot,
cunning rider, rider leary—
keeping fairly near the exit,
easing gee-gee, lest it weary,
slipped off earthward from the saddle,
stands dismounted by his gee-gee.
See him! watch him! wily Rufus
gathers up his reins so artless;
artless Rufus, so nonchalant,
places casual foot in stirrup!
Where's he broken? Rufus leary,
foxy brother—awfully wily—
we know what your little game is—
going to tell us when you're mounted!
Grins he, unabashed, the culprit,
grins a grin, and points a lance-tip.
"There they go!" the motley sounder,
lean sow lobbing, young boar trotting,
snouts set straight for Chandrabhága—
shingly, bushy Chandrabhága!
And behind them, breaking covert,
bursting from the prickly covert,
looms a shape! Ribs sudden thumping,

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thumps the heart, and throbs the temple—
Shades of *sooars!* *What a whopper!*
Black as night that brow umbrageous!
grizzly-grey those "chaps" outrageous!—
and that mighty head dividing
ploughshare-like the thorn's deriding.
Steals he strangely, smoothly, forward,
(twinkling legs screened all by grasses)—
halts! And, never sidewise turning,
roves his little keen-set optic—
right and left his twinkling optic.
Softly! softly! brother hunters!
(reins so ready, spurred heels twitching).
Prithee! note that plain so stretching,
full two miles before us stretching:
grace awhile! The grey-boar trotteth
to his doom on plain far stretching.
Grace awhile! Till grey-boar trotteth
just too far to regain Pakhal,
not too far to gain the Chandra—
two miles hence the Chandrabhága—
ere we catch him. Wait! Now, *RIDE!*
'Neath strong hoof-beats furrow flying—
rushing wind in ears roar-roaring—
dart we from that knoll uprising,
bush-encumbered, palm frond-studded,
dart out on that plain far stretching.
Now the hunter, Arab, Waler,
neck and neck shall prove their mettle.
In a moment fly to meet us
prickly bush and hedgerow thorny;
just a pull to steady Arab,
bounds into the air our Waler,
hedgerow thorny's far behind us!
When the blood so madly courses,
to the lips a yell it forces;
yell of rushing, tearing gallop—
howl of glorious exultation
in this tearing, fighting gallop.
Grey-boar, lobbing there before us,

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looming ever nearer, nearer,
hears that yell of exultation!
hears that rushing, tearing gallop!
slackens in his lazy lobbing—
halts! And never sidewise turning,
glints a sudden glittering optic.
Just too far the kindly Pakhal!
rather far, dear Chandrabhága!
Grey-boar, swiftly meditating,
scarcely he one instant waiting,
springs out stoutly once more westward—
westward for dear Chandrabhága!
But that deadly instant's pausing
brought swift hunters straining nearer,
till that grisly back, see-sawing,
scarce a spear's length vantage drawing,
seems to threaten with its bristling
fierce, and truculent see-sawing.
So, awhile, the hunted, hunters,
straining—racing—fly on forwards.
But the pace too good to last is—
See! His bounds seem getting shorter,
every leap his loins stretch longer;
angry boar, like lightning turning,
propping hoofs the light dust spurning,
crosses, like some swift torpedo,
foaming bows of rushing cruiser—
Then it was that spear-*point* harmless
sped into the furrow—bloodless—
and the Arab's knees, thud-thudding,
'gainst old Grey-boar's side struck thudding.
On his side comes Grey-boar angry—
down goes Arab—soars the rider!
turning turtle, mighty toss takes!
Lucky he that Grey-boar rising,
stubborn, fierce, on plain arising,
marks a second foe—or truly
shared he fate of poor Adonis!
Flying, spurring, closely after,
comes the swiftly pounding Waler—

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much too solid to knock over!—
Rushes neck-stretched, thudding Waler.
Rush to meet her, Grey-boar foaming—
red his furious glinting optic—
bristles upright, grey "chaps" foaming,
onwards—upwards—bounds at Waler.
"*Hough—hough—hough!*" the Grey-boar foaming!
True bites spear-point, point of shoulder
passing—like a stroke of lightning—
such the force of that mad impact—
glances far and deeply through him;
but the speed of such an impact,
Grey-boar up the haft it hurls him;
cleanly keen, tush slices stifle—
stifle of the sturdy Waler;
cracks stout bamboo, splinters spear-haft,
foaming Grey-boar's left behind us—
standing sternly ominous, and grimly,
like some tide-set rock the surges
rushing over leave behind them.

So it comes—last fierce finale,
reins all tugging—wrenching—wheeling;
dry lips panting—wide eyes staring—
spurring back on Grey-boar reeling—
"*Hough—hough—hough!*" brave boar! still fighting—
grunting—charging—tushes tossing
fiercely upward! "Let 'em *all* come!"
Till at last—foes ever facing—
comes some strangely weary faintness,
dies the light from eyes courageous,
sinks to earth boar—grey and glorious!

. . . . . .

Home o'er brown fields quietly jogging—
passed hot gallop—passed fierce killing—
let us ponder on this killing.
"How he must have felt that killing,
"grim old Grey-boar! brave old Grey-boar!
"rather I the kindly bullet—
"sudden, thudding, numbing bullet—
"than that chill blue lance's probing.

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"Ugh! the gory lance so probing.
"Cruel fate thine! poor old Grey-boar—"
(falls o'er eyes a misty feeling).
"*Not a bit, dear boys!*—believe me,
"in a tearing, fighting gallop,
"when the end comes—comes it glorious!
"for in such a fight uproarious,
"where is dread anticipation?
"dead to pain is all sensation!
"Just one rushing—slashing—roaring—
"howling—maddening exultation—
"then Oblivion. Drops some Curtain.
"At its brightest, life's lamp broken.
"But the flame that's so extinguished,
"naught *it* knows when—how—extinguished!"
Therefore, give us, good old Pakhal!—
dear old palm-fringed Pakhal Naddi!—
Boars in plenty—gallops glorious—
many such a fight uproarious—
Pakhal Naddi of the Palm Trees!

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THE MAN-EATER OF BÉLKHÉRA

HIDDEN away in a corner of the little-known province of Berar, and about one hundred miles due west of the capital of the Central Provinces, lies the little station of—"Junglypur." Lying in the *terai* of the Satpúra mountains, Junglypur faces the steep wall-like ramparts of this range of hills at a distance of some five miles. Behind, to the southward, lie extensive, level, and fertile plains, of cotton-producing fame.

In the old days the jungle almost surrounded the little cantonment, flowing down from the hills over the *terai* country, unbroken save for a few patches of rough cultivation. In those times game of all kinds was very plentiful, and within easy reach of the station. It is on record that an officer of one of the native infantry regiments at Junglypur bagged a tiger in a field of *túr* on the spot now occupied by the rifle range; while a party of sportsmen shot three tigers before breakfast in the then dense coverts of the Chandrabhága river, which issues from the hills six miles to the west. In the jungles along the lofty Bairát ranges bison used to be plentiful, and sámbar and bears were everywhere abundant. Panthers of course were common, and in those good old times they were even known to enter the native bazaars, and sometimes the barracks or Lines, in search of dogs, goats, or other prey.

Time has of course altered all this, its effects being felt even in an out-of-the-way place like Junglypur, and much

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of the charm of its situation has in consequence departed. The ploughshare has bitten deeply into the once jungle-smothered lands; roads have opened up the erstwhile impenetrable depths of the "Mélghát," as the hilly forest region lying within the Satpúra range is called; improvements in firearms have thrown a large quantity of muzzle-loading muskets in the way of the natives of those tracts; and game has greatly diminished in numbers.

However, when I was quartered at this queer little old-fashioned station, some years ago, there was still a fair amount of *shikár* to be had—if one cared to work pretty hard for it, and had sufficient patience to put up with a somewhat disheartening proportion of blank days. In this connection I refer to "big game"; antelope, *chinkára*, and such smaller game were really plentiful, and not difficult to get at.

I will, however, pass over a description of the sport obtainable in the vicinity of little Junglypur, confining myself to the story of the Bélkhéra man-eater, a recital of whose misdeeds and bold ferocity may prove more interesting.

It is an accepted fact that a large number of man-eaters in Central India and the Deccan are panthers. Nobody who has even a short experience of panthers and tigers will deny that the former animal is the more dangerous of the two. The tiger is, as a rule, a gentleman. The panther, on the other hand, is a bounder. The tiger is not infrequently a blunderer; but *Felis pardus* knows exactly how to combine the two attributes of dashing pluck and almost unerring discretion, which are his by inheritance.

The panther, moreover—his habits leading him to the vicinity of villages—is much more familiar with man, and in consequence holds him in greater contempt than does the tiger, whose acquaintance with the biped is generally confined to a yelling band of demons and a terrifying

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explosion from some treetop. It is therefore not surprising to find that, where their numbers are nearly equal, the spotted cat is a greater *connoisseur* of human flesh than is his striped congener.

During the time that I was a resident of Junglypur there was usually one man-eater at least at his fell work in the Mélghát and surrounding hilly districts, and he was pretty certain to be a panther. A favourite ground for these operations was the low, hilly country bordering the Tapti river, whence the attack would be conducted, and toll taken in the small Korku villages situated on the rich and cultivated strips of alluvial land on its banks. One such man-killer was credited with a bag of twenty-seven victims, including a misguided native *shikári*, who sat up for him in a tree, but was, in his turn, cleverly stalked. All that his friends found of this unfortunate were the soles of his feet and a coil of blood-stained hair. At last this dreaded marauder was shot by a plucky little Korkúni as it was dragging her husband out of his hut in a field at night.

In the neighbourhood of a hill village named Asalwara, not far from the old fort of Narnála, another man-eating panther made his appearance; and after eight grass-cutters—members of a gang who had come up from the plains to ply their trade—had been mysteriously made away with, he was wounded by a brother-officer of mine and disappeared. From this it was concluded that he had died of his wound. However, the man-killing began not long afterwards on the banks of the Tapti once more.

From my own observations I have formed a theory that, unlike the tiger, who once a man-eater is often always a man-eater, the panther, with his superior cunning, is not so incautious as to enter on such a career in too exclusive a manner. He probably exercises the greatest circumspection in choosing his human victims, only taking advantage

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of them when satisfied by patient observation that he can do so with comparative impunity, and spreading his depredations in the human line over wide areas. Between times he must, therefore, fall back on his normal habits—feeding on jungle-pigs, village goats, cattle, etc. These habits it is, probably, which make it so difficult to tell whether the real offender has been brought to book.

One evening in the cold weather a Korku appeared at my bungalow, and informed me that a man from his village, Bélkhéra, had been caught—by tiger or *shér*, of course—while cutting bamboos up the precipitous sides of the Máhádéo *khóra*. He was quite sure that it was a tiger: had seen it looking at him from some rocks, and its pugs were *so* big—spreading out his hands as he spoke: so I was equally certain that it was a panther.

Bélkhéra is a small Korku village four miles from Junglypur, and at the foot of the hills. It is situated on the banks of a large *nála* that runs up for nearly four miles into the heart of the mountains. At the far end of this long deep glen is the aforesaid Máhádéo *khóra*, or ravine. Nothing therefore could be attempted that night, especially as there was no moon.

Next morning, however, I rode out to Bélkhéra, before it was light, and the first streaks of dawn found us halfway up its long glen. It was bitterly cold, and the deep-sunk valley was drenched in heavy dew. The little jungle track lay alternately over the trap boulders of the shrunken stream and through long patches of red *rausa* grass. To the right and left the hillsides soared almost sheerly up, clothed with bamboo thickets, and thickly dotted with innumerable *salai* trees, which at this season were shedding their autumnal-tinted leaves. High over the surrounding spurs the curious pyramid-shaped peak of the Chór Pahár (Robbers' Hill) jutted into the sky. Further on, rising to a height of about 3,500 feet, were the twin hilltops of Jhákra, and under them lay the precipice-girdled Máhádéo

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khóra. It was here that the panther had seized the wood-cutter on the previous day.

At last we arrived at this ravine. The scene of the tragedy was pointed out, and I crept quietly forward to reconnoitre the spot. It was possible that the panther might still be near his victim's body.

The unfortunate man had been seized and strangled, without so much as a cry escaping him, while engaged in chopping male bamboos out of a small thicket of these plants; and his body appeared by the tracks to have been dragged along the hillside into the bed of the steeply falling ravine, and then carried further up it. We now arrived at a place over which pours a little cascade during the rainy season; and here the tracks ceased. I had ascended this ravine once before, and was therefore able to make a guess at the most likely place for the panther to lie up in. This was a deep pocket in the smooth-worn rocks, over which hung the roots of an old banyan tree that clung to the cliffside higher up, sheltering a small pool of stagnant rainwater. Wearing cotton-soled stalking boots as I was, there was little difficulty in climbing up to this spot without a sound, and, slipping back the cartridges into the breech of my rifle, I crawled forward and peered round the corner.

The place was deserted, and not a sound disturbed the silence, except the rustle of some dried leaves as a small brown squirrel ran up the rocks. The green scum on the surface of the water had been disturbed, however, and the rock at its edge had been freshly wetted.

I was proceeding to examine this, when a stone fell from the cliffs upstream, and an exclamation from one of the Korkus caused me to glance up. A large panther was in the act of clambering up another dry waterfall. He clung to the lime-encrusted rock just at the top, and was glancing back before springing out of sight beyond it. At this moment I fired.

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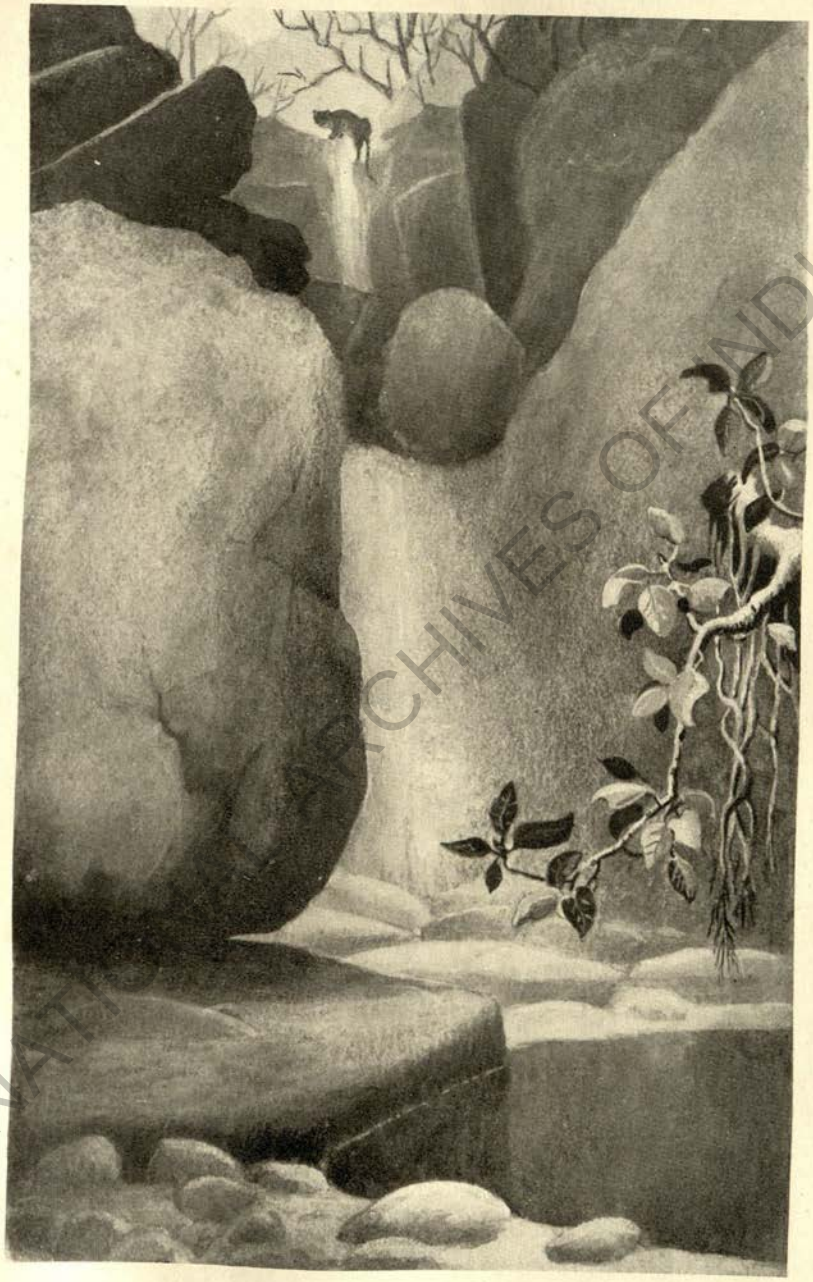

HE CLUNG TO THE ROCK

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The brute slipped, recovered, clung again, and, an instant later, disappeared before a second shot could be put in.

We had a difficult climb out of the ravine; but I felt sure I had hit the panther, and that I should find him not far away; and at last we stood looking down on the spot where he had clung and disappeared. With due precautions this place was examined, and, further on, a few drops of blood were found. They led us up and on to a little game-path, continued here and there for about a hundred yards, and then failed.

Two hours afterwards we gave up the search in despair, and returned to the pool. There, neatly tucked away in the knotted roots of the banyan tree, were the remains of the miserable woodcutter. All his clothes had been stripped off him, and the legs, backs of the thighs, and all soft parts having been eaten and torn away, the corpse presented the most ghastly appearance. The head was stiffly bent backwards. The teeth projected in a frightful grin. Even in life the poor Korku is no beauty.

The throat of this poor creature bore marks of extra ferocious treatment, and was simply covered with deep, gaping wounds. A peculiar feature of his injuries was that he had been partially scalped!

As may be imagined, I lost little time in getting away from this dreadful spectacle.

That afternoon I returned with a number of men and very thoroughly beat the surrounding ravines and jungle, but with no greater success. It could only be hoped, therefore, that the man-eater had taken himself off to die in some distant spot.

* * * * * *

Almost exactly one year subsequent to the above events, I was again informed of a human "kill" near the ill-fated Bélkhéra.

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This time the victim was an old woman. She had been seized half-way up the main glen, near a place named 'Béra Páni.' Béra Páni was a kind of rendezvous for grass-cutters, where they collected their grass bundles to be carted down to the village.

This poor old lady had come up the valley with a party of Korkus, who had scattered in search of grass. Her son, a child of ten or so, was with her. Son and mother separated during their work. At midday the boy heard the sound of a fall, and a kind of gurgle, but thought it was his mother throwing down a heavy bundle of grass and then clearing her throat. There were grasscutters all over the hillsides, who called out to each other occasionally, and from the ravine hard by, down at Béra Páni, came the cheerful tinkling of bells as the bullocks stood grazing near the carts.

In the late afternoon the boy carried his load of grass to the carts, but his mother did not appear. Becoming anxious after a while, he went uphill again in search of her, and presently came on her grass bundles, then on her sickle. Further on he saw blood-smears on the grass stems; which so terrified him that he bolted like a deer back to Béra Páni, screaming, "Tiger! tiger!!"

In a moment the cry had spread to the grasscutters yet on the hill, who rushed huddling together, and were shortly afterwards chattering and gesticulating round the motherless boy. After a while half a dozen men banded together, and, armed with sticks and hatchets, followed the tracks of the "kill" and drag, shouting, and beating trees, up a side *nála*. First they came on the woman's *sári*, then on the body itself—one leg eaten. The panther was slinking off uphill, having been actually seated tearing at his prey when disturbed. One of the Korkus, having been employed by me previously on my excursions in these hills, had the presence of mind to persuade his companions to leave the body as it lay and send for me. A bungle, how-

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ever, was made, and I did not get the news until next day at two o'clock.

Shortly after four o'clock I was walking up the Bélkhéra glen. As I turned a corner I came on a number of the villagers, among whom sat two native policemen, solemnly taking down the evidence of the *panchâyat* which had just been held on the corpse of the ill-fated woman. Here I learnt that during the night the panther had returned and dragged the body of his victim far up the hillside. Of course, as usual, it was a *bágh*—an enormous tiger with paws *so* big, etc.—but I had discovered the pugs of a large panther close to the stream by this time. After a talk, in order to discover how the land lay, my Pathán orderly and I, led by a guide, proceeded to climb the hill, followed by men with *kulhâris* (small hatchets) and rope.

The man-eater had removed the corpse about five hundred feet up the hillside; and being guided to the spot and ascertaining, by creeping quietly in, that he was not in the immediate vicinity, I found it poked away under a small bamboo clump. Its appearance was still more horrible than that of the Korku killed the previous year, but somehow not so revolting, the remains bearing small resemblance to humanity. The entire lower half of the body had been devoured, with the exception of the shins and feet; the knee-joints had been crunched apart like the knuckle-bones of a chicken, and lay twisted out of all semblance to human shape; one arm had been chewed; and the other lay extended, with the pewter bracelets still encircling the withered old wrists.

The nape of the neck, the shoulders, and throat were fearfully mauled, and bore witness to a ferocity of savaging that must have been quite unnecessary, considering the helpless weakness of the poor old victim.

And as I looked down at these poor relics I suddenly noted, for the first time, that this victim, too, had been *partially scalped!*

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Was it, then, that my poor shot last year was indirectly responsible for at least another human life? Had that panther escaped to claim at least this other victim?

The sun had sunk over the opposite hillsides, so I turned with relief from such discomforting thoughts to superintend the building of the *machán* in which I was to spend the night.

Not a single good tree was to be found: all were either stunted *salai* or other small wood. However, the difficulty was surmounted by cutting three long poles in the neighbouring ravine; and, lashing them upright to supplement the flabby boughs of the nearest *salai* tree, a rough platform was erected at a height of some fifteen feet from the ground. Some bran was scattered round the remains of the old woman, which had been dragged away from the shadow of the bamboos and tied firmly by the arm to a sapling.

It was rapidly getting dark when the men moved off; and my orderly and myself were left sitting, listening to their footsteps dying away in the fallen leaves.

As a rule I sit alone for panthers; but on this occasion I preferred the company of my orderly; which, as events proved, was a fortunate decision on my part.

It was a dark night: that is to say, we should have no moon until about four in the morning, and then only a thin and waning sickle. I had fitted my night-sight to my gun, in which I had placed a couple of cartridges loaded with slugs. This night-sight consisted of an ordinary visiting card, into the end of which a V-shaped cut had been made. When this card has been fastened to the top rib of one's gun by a couple of rubber rings, the bottom of the V fitted against the barleycorn, or foresight, and the ear-like flaps raised, I know of few better aids to shooting by night, provided there is some glimmer of light. Aim is taken by getting the object between the flaps of the white card V.

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My orderly and I got into our greatcoats and rugs—for it was to be a cold night—and settled into the semblance of two stone figures.

When the last faint flush following sunset had died away, the jungle grew very dark and intensely quiet. A few stars showed themselves over the head of the hill that reared up blackly into the vault of the sky far above us. Down in the valley behind night-birds called at rare intervals. In the *machán*, however, all was still. Not a sound came from the hillsides.

About half an hour after this a distant rustle was heard uphill. Then it stopped. A few minutes later Abbás Khán touched my foot. Some heavy animal was coming quite boldly down the hillside. Then came a faint deep breath close under the tree in which we were sitting! My heart thumped heavily. I opened my mouth to breathe less noisily.

There was something moving stealthily near the foot of our tree; but only the faintest of sounds came when a stone turned slowly. We were right between the animal and the spot where the corpse lay bound to its sapling. Would it pass under us and give me a chance on the patch of bran? Hours seemed to pass!

A stick cracked in quite another direction on the other side of the grisly "kill." Very slowly I turned myself in that direction, and strained my eyes on the faintly yellow strip of bran with that misshapen dark blotch in the centre of it.

All movement appeared to have ceased. Probably the panther was sitting, waiting, watching, and would presently creep forward to seek his abominable food.

In this state we sat on for an apparently immense period of time. I noted that the Pleiades, instead of hanging over the dark crest of the Chór Pahár, were now high above my head. A large green-coloured star had just risen over the trees in the distance. I slipped a supporting

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hand under my doubled-up and aching knee, gently altered its position, and sat on patiently.

Was the corpse down there moving? No! Yes, it was, though. How *beastly!* As I intently watched it, it seemed to roll over! I could, in my fancy, see its dull white eyes gleaming in the starlight, the head raised despairingly to watch, helplessly, the approach of its destroyer.

I began to think of Forsyth's story of "Padam Singh and the Man-eater"; of the half-eaten corpse that raised its dead hands to point out the *shikári* shivering in his tree; and how those hands had to be pegged to the ground before the tiger would return to the "kill"!

A small sound, as of tiny teeth, made itself audible in the stillness of night; a little champing of minute jaws, and then a little squeak, and the eating ceased.

Some mongoose or jungle-cat was at the corpse! With a shudder of disgust I turned slowly back to my original position.

Very faint noises came and went in the surrounding jungle; some dried twig or leaf falling to the ground would set the pulses beating expectantly. I was awaiting a creeping object to show itself on the light-coloured patch of bran. Would it come?

Was that a slight dragging sound in the grass? The beast that had come down the hillside *must* have been the panther! Some indistinct and faint—very faint—noises persuaded me that the creature was wandering round us in the dark surrounding jungle. I had heard it under our tree. Perhaps it was sitting somewhere near, watching, feline fashion, ere crawling up to complete its meal.

I was very drowsy. Perhaps I had been asleep for a moment or two. This would not do. Yet it was sleepy . . . awfully sleepy . . . work.

Suddenly behind me came a shock, a gasp of terror; the tree rocked: there was a scraping sound; my orderly had

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disappeared; and then I heard a soft thud at the foot of the tree. Bang! bang! went both barrels of my gun into the air, and I raised a tremendous shouting, instinctively grasping the situation. Before I could reload, something simply rushed up the tree and fell across my legs into the *machán*, right across the muzzle of the gun. It was the Pathán! Had I been reloaded, nothing could have saved him — I had snapped both triggers against his chest, making sure it was the panther!

The poor fellow was trembling in every limb—as well he might. For a few moments we were both too dazed to speak, but I had reloaded the gun, shoved my loaded rifle into his hands, and we sat facing the only accessible side of the *machán*. Behind us the hillside descended so steeply that no living creature could invade us from that direction.

After a while we heard the crackle of leaves at a considerable distance in the jungle; and then a barking deer or *khákar* set up a sudden and incessant barking that became fainter and fainter as the little creature retreated down the glen—probably before the panther, which was apparently going off that way.

We now took a couple of the poles forming the flooring of the *machán* and tied them with the orderly's *pagri* so as to form a slight barrier to any second attack on our exposed side.

I then held a whispered consultation with him. He had escaped without a scratch! His story was that he was nodding drowsily, when something struck and caught both his legs below the knee, and dragged him out of his perch! As he fell, he turned, and gripped a limb of the tree, but was slipping down, with an immense weight on his legs, till his hands came to a fork of the trunk. Here he held on with all his strength; his right gaiter was ripped clean off, the beast let go its clutch, he heard its claws tearing the soft bark, and then it dropped to the ground. Next instant he had somehow regained our shelter!

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Although the first attack of this fearless brute had failed, and our position had been strengthened, our feelings may well be imagined. It was pitch dark in the gloom of the trees. I touched the open face of my watch. The hands felt to be indicating one o'clock in the morning. There were still four and a half hours of night before us, during which we were liable to be stalked—practically helpless ourselves, but clearly apparent to every sense of this practised, creeping murderer.

Once more the hours dragged on in silence.

Two large owls set up a most horrible low moaning among the trees to the right. The air became damp and very cold. Morning could not be far off. A faint breeze rustled the treetops, and some bamboos creaked uneasily.

Until now not a sound had been heard to indicate the return of the panther, but at last I fancied that the faintest sound of breathing had been borne to my ears. Every sense was instantly at acutest tension. My orderly was breathing through his nose. I leant slowly back, and, pressing his knee, uttered a faint sh—sh!

The topmost branches of a neighbouring *sálai* tree quivered. Was it the wind? No; the air was now quite still.

There was something shaking that tree. Its branches moved again—just the tips that were outlined against the faintly luminous sky.

What with the cold and the suspense, I seemed to be shaking the whole *machán*. My throat was painfully dry. The effort to swallow made a fearful noise. I wanted to cough.

Something whitish or greyish seemed to be climbing close to the trunk of the *salai* tree: it moved!

"*Máro!*" breathed the Pathan.

I gently, slowly, raised the gun to my shoulder, shaking with anxiety, and straining my eyes in the darkness.

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Nothing could now be seen. It must have been imagination!

The tree quivered again; a faintly whitish patch was very, very slowly elongating itself and becoming more distinct. I got it well between the ears of my night-sight. . . .

Bang!

As the sound of the shot went rolling and reverberating through the hills, something sprang lightly off through the grass.

* * * * * *

Dawn was surely breaking? Objects stood out more distinctly, and the fainest greenish hue appeared in the eastern sky. The dark outline of the old woman's cadaver became clearer: its upraised hand with the stiffened fingers seemed stretched out in mute appeal against the indignity of the cord that bound it to the tree. Just a hand, a glistening, bedewed head and trunk, and, lower down—ugh!

The faint crow of a jungle-cock came across the grey depths of the valley. Dawn had come, and the man-eater had escaped again.

* * * * * *

About six weeks later I was coming down from the hills on my way home from an unsuccessful search for sámbar, having ordered my mare to Bélkhéra. As Abbás Khán and I descended the foothills and approached the village, we became aware of some unusual stir among the huts, from which there arose a ceaseless screaming—some death, no doubt. I had placed my foot in the stirrup, and was vaulting into the saddle, when a Korku came running up. Once more had the panther taken toll of Bélkhéra!

A buffalo-herd had been seized, while grazing his cattle near the little river, not far from the village. The buffaloes

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had driven off the brute, and the man had been rescued, only, however, to expire in the village, whither he had been borne. The panther had retreated into the hills.

I asked to see the victim of this latest outrage, and was led down the central "street" of the Korku village. The cow-herd was lying on a *charpai*, just as he had died; some vein in the neck had been severed, and, in spite of a rough bandage, a dark patch of blood was congealing on the ground under the string bedstead. There were the usual deep holes in the throat and on the nape of the neck, and—the Bélkhéra man-eater's mark was there! A long strip of skin and hair had been torn off and hung from the dead man's scalp!

All this time the female relatives of the victim were making the most dreadful and—to their mind—highly commendable noise as they sat around. One could scarcely make one's self heard; so I retreated to a distance to inquire more fully into the circumstances of this last attack—the boldest of all. The *patél* of the village suggested that I should once more make use of the body of the panther's victim. "The whole neighbourhood was terrorised," said he, "and the villagers dared not enter the *ramnah* for grass, save in compact parties. Their very means of existence was threatened. The *sahib* must really rid them of this scourge!"

To this, however, there was an impediment: the relatives of the dead man would not permit the body to be removed!

I sat down and waited, while a fearful pandemonium of altercation ensued, through which I could make out the shrill voices of the female relations haggling over a question of *baksheesh*.

Finally, it was settled that I might have the use of their corpse until dark: after that nothing would induce them to permit it to remain out—the *shér* might return and eat of it!

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We walked up the river-bank and reached the scene of the catastrophe. The body of the cow-herd was laid down just where he had been caught, and I prepared a hiding-place in which to watch until dark, when the villagers were to turn out, with drums and torches, and take the corpse away.

But now events took an unexpected turn, as they not infrequently do where panthers are concerned. It was fated that the end of this notorious evildoer should be brought about in a singularly tame and commonplace manner.

My orderly rushed up and informed me that the panther had *not* gone off into the hills. He had found its tracks leading into a little patch of scrub and *samálu* bush in the river-bed; and, "circling" this covert, could find no traces of exit. Therefore the panther might be there! At any rate, a silent beat could do no harm.

The village was only a few hundred yards away; and a goodly body of beaters was shortly ready, all armed with bamboo *láthis*. I posted myself on the river-bank about a hundred yards upstream, and the beat began.

A few seconds later a large panther walked quietly out of a cactus bush and sat down directly below me, looking back over his shoulder. My rifle was raised; and next moment the man-eater of Bélkhéra had paid the penalty of his crimes.

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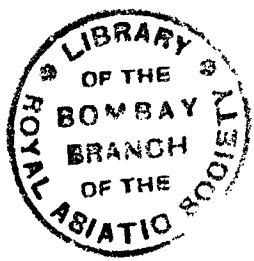

ON THE COTTON PLAINS

MY earliest recollections are of a yellow, grassy, undulating, waste country, studded with low thorn bushes, in the shade of one of which lay my mother, as I nestled at her side.

The sun had just risen, and shone warmly on my callow hide; in the distance, on the confines of a vast plain, lay a long, purple line of hills; the ceaseless drone and buzz of insects filled the air with a drowsy murmur; a flock of cranes passed high overhead, their harsh cries mellowed by distance, as they winged their wedge-shaped flight towards the cultivated country, where the green of the *rabi* crops faded into the blue distance. A feeling of joy, of exuberant youth, flowed through my young veins, as I rose to my feet, and stretched my long, ungainly limbs in the glad sunshine; then, executing a blithe gambol and sidelong jump, stood, pricking my ears at the song of a villager driving his yoke of oxen to the plough.

My mother lay with drooping ears, lazily flicking the flies from her haunch, her full dark eyes ever and anon roaming dreamily over the wide expanse of fallow before her. Ah! It was a good country that! Rich fields, good company, and few of the worries of life which fall to the share of the buck whose lines Fate casts in less remote pastures. Any antelope possessing a fairly developed bump of caution should, in that district, grow to green old age, and yet never hear the whistle of bullet or crack of rifle.

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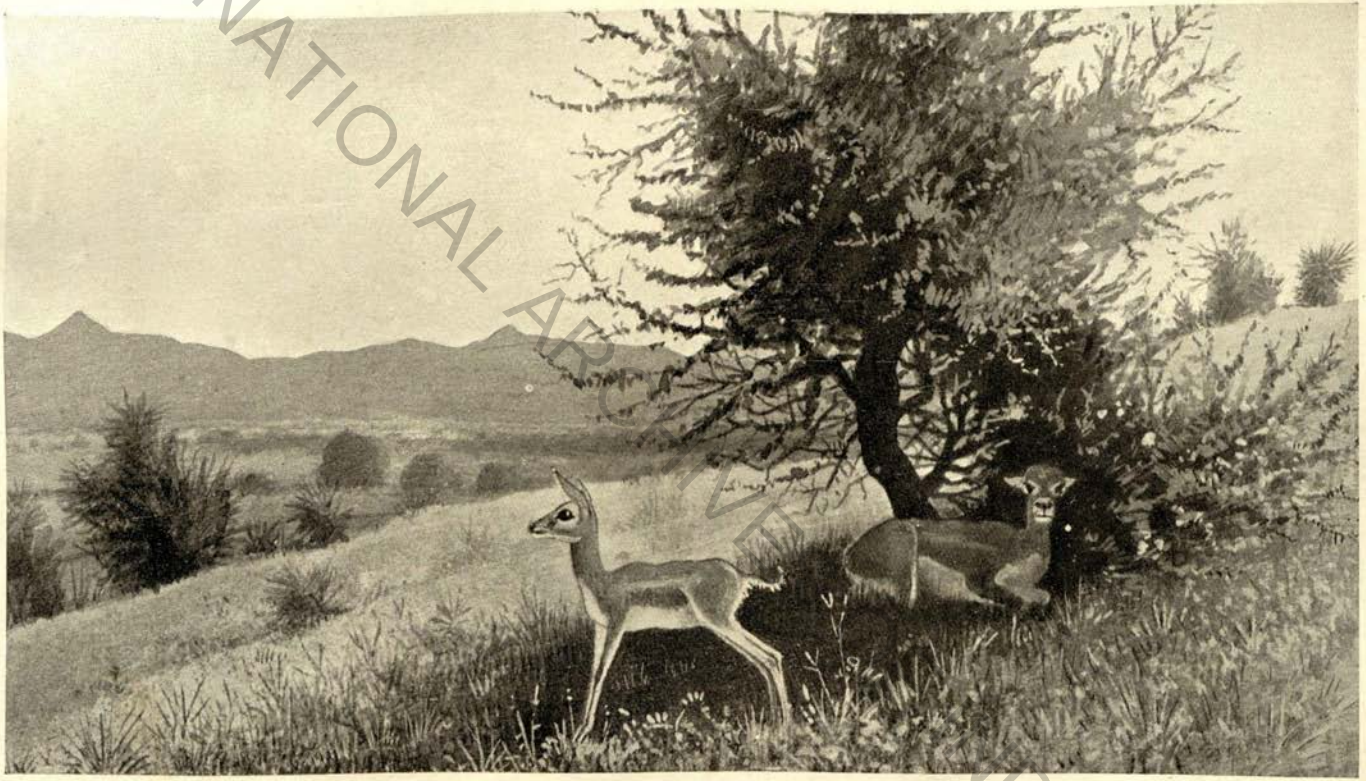

STOOD, PRICKING MY EARS

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Of course it was not such a paradise as held no alarms, for that very moment a strange odour filled my nostrils, and my mother started up, with twitching nose and cocked ears, as two lank grey forms halted suddenly, a field's length away, in an open space in the low scrub. A moment later I was flying after her, as she leaped scudding across the plain, bounding into the air at every few strides. Oh! the exhilaration of that first wild rush over the flying brown earth! We left the scrub jungle far behind, and, crossing a wide dry *nála* at reduced speed, on a sudden wheeled and halted; and I trotted with dilated nostrils and cocked tail to my mother's side. She bent a swift look of pride on me.

"*Shábásh*, little one, the fleetest and sturdiest of all I have borne! Did skulking wolf delude himself with thoughts of an easy prey?" So saying, she led the way towards a large herd of our kind, who were scattered over open ground, not far from a field of tall green cotton; some lying drowsily ruminating, others capriciously grazing or moving slowly about, while one or two does gazed penetratingly down wind. On the edge of the cotton field stood one of whom I had not yet seen the like. Whereas we were sombre yellow-brown creatures, this one was glossy black—black with pure white belly and throat. Moreover, long, gnarled, spiral horns sprung from his head, and ended in sharp points, and, as he turned and paced with lordly mien towards us, his horns laid back over his haunches, nose disdainfully in air, and tail curled up over his back in the arrogance of his pride, I knew that I looked on the lord of the herd—the finest of our race.

As he passed us by superciliously, my mother whispered, "Your father, my dear, a fine fellow doubtless, but foolish, headstrong, and reckless, as are most of his sex. What he would do, or how he would fare without us, his wives, to keep a watch on prowling enemies, I know not. Look at him now!"—this as my parent dashed out from the herd

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and rounded up a skittishly inclined young doe, driving her back to us, his sharp horns lowered in feigned attack. "Thus my first lord died. He left us to fasten a quarrel on a stranger, but in some inexplicable manner their horns seemed to interlace, and in a twinkling three *Párdis* sprang from hiding, and captured him while madly struggling to break the mysterious bonds."

"And the stranger, mother?" I bleated.

"Beware of such strangers," grunted she.

We were a large community at that time, and, when on the move to the evening feeding-grounds, our scattered line might have stretched over the breadth of two fields. As for the cries of the night watchers, perched on their tall *machâns*, they fell on deaf ears—for who yet denied us our bellyful save to move us on to some neighbour's field?

The high crops fell, and were gathered; the great stacks of *kadhi* rose round every village; and we roamed over wide plains, stretching uninterrupted save for some round-topped mango grove, or the dark line of trees marking the place where a village rose round its ancient mud *gharri*. Chill dawn would find us grouped in some gram field, the sharp acid rime of which appeals to the salt-craving inherent in us; or belly deep in the broad belts of pale green wheat.

And so the seasons passed.

The dry weather came with its fiery sun, when we antelope collected nearer the sandy bed of the river, winding its now thin stream from pool to pool. Then the rainy season, when other herds joined ours from the level black cotton-soil tracts, and we ranged in our gathered hundreds on the drier rising grounds, all save the bucks standing out conspicuously against the dark wet earth, as some gleam of sunlight caught our yellow skins.

Never shall I forget a day succeeding a heavy fall of rain, when I had lingered behind my mother (I was not

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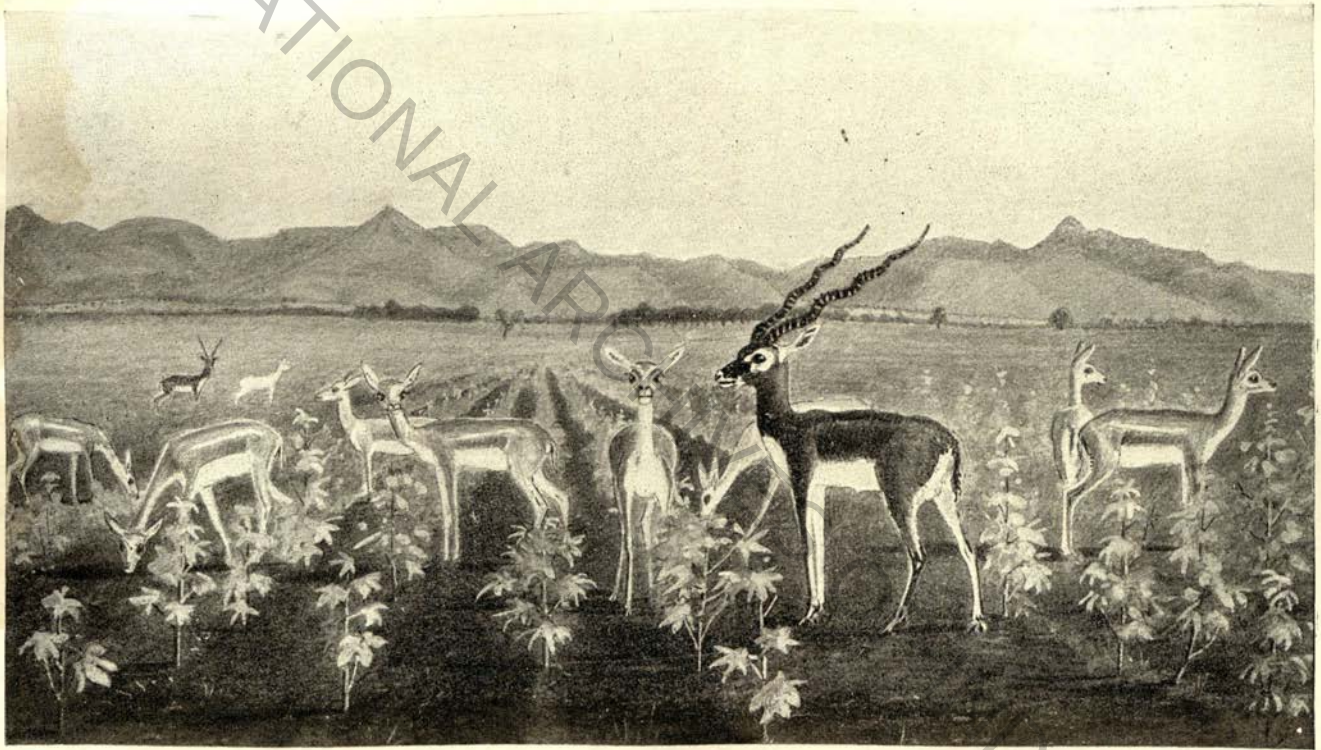

THE LORD OF THE HERD

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now so tied to her side), and found myself separated from her by an expanse of tenacious wet soil. As I stood undecided, there came a laboured panting, and a yell of encouragement, as a village dog, urged on by his owner, snatched fiercely at my flank! With a bound I escaped him, and toiled frantically over the soft mud, into which my sharp feet sank deeply. Again I felt, with despair, the hot breath on my haunch—when suddenly the ground became harder, I drew away from my pursuer, and, gaining the grassy slope of a rising ground, finally shook him off, baffled, in spite of his oiled feet; he now halted with lolling tongue, and, turning, slunk back whence he came.

With the rain the crops rose, and in a few weeks the plains were clothed in green *jawári* and wide fields of cotton, save for the ground reserved for the later sowings of wheat and gram—*jawári* that soon reared its great stalks high above the heads of the workers in the fields; that formed a pleasant covert for us, who now wandered in small and scattered bands, scarce troubling to change our quarters, so abundant and accessible was our food. But with the *jawári* came the *Bhois*. Cunningly disposing their tall nets along the edge and angles of the fields of high millet, they would endeavour to move a herd of antelope so as to entangle them in a *cul-de-sac;* and their patience and skill were nearly always rewarded by some foolish one of our number.

The first time I was introduced to this danger was when my sprouting horns were only a few inches in length. We were all lying amid the stems of a wide field of *jawári*, the thick green heads of which sheltered us from the peculiarly intense sun of late September. It had been very still, when a slight breeze set the tall corn whispering, and brought on its breath the strange acrid odour which I had noticed as being peculiar to men. So pronounced was it that I instinctively sprang up, and was followed by

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the whole herd, which, after a moment's hesitation, moved off through the thick covert.

In the best of company, I of course brought up the rear of the herd, together with several youngsters of my own age; behind us, as befitted him, paced the lord and master buck—ever the last to fly from danger. Our timid vanguard of watchful does had almost reached the edge of the *jawári* patch, when a sudden flurry arose, and they leaped, bounding and bucking in all directions. As I followed the lead of my excellent mamma, in whose sound judgment I had perfect faith, I saw my sterner parent trot straight on with a curl of his lip. *He* was not going to share the universal panic—and on he went.

Then a sudden yell burst out behind him, and he gave one mighty leap out of the field, struck something yielding, intangible, and yet arresting, and came a tremendous cropper, firmly entangled in a long net, as a chorus of shouts rose from the netters. As I darted after the herd, which had escaped to right and left, I have dim recollection of a furious thrashing of hoofs, and a grunting, gurgling bellow, followed by much loud guffawing and elated chattering. I don't think they killed him just then. They usually make their victims walk home with them. It is such a nuisance to carry them, you see, and matters can be simplified by sewing up the victim's eyelids.

It was not many hours after this that we caught sight of a fine buck gazing fixedly at us in the distance, as we all stood packed together in an open bit of ploughed land.

He paced in our direction, then halted and stared again at a respectful distance, for I may mention that my late parent had a pretty wide notoriety for savage exclusiveness. After following behind us awhile, this buck ventured on closer inspection, and, somehow tumbling to the hang of things, began to assert authority. He actually had the effrontery to chase me from my mother's side and catch

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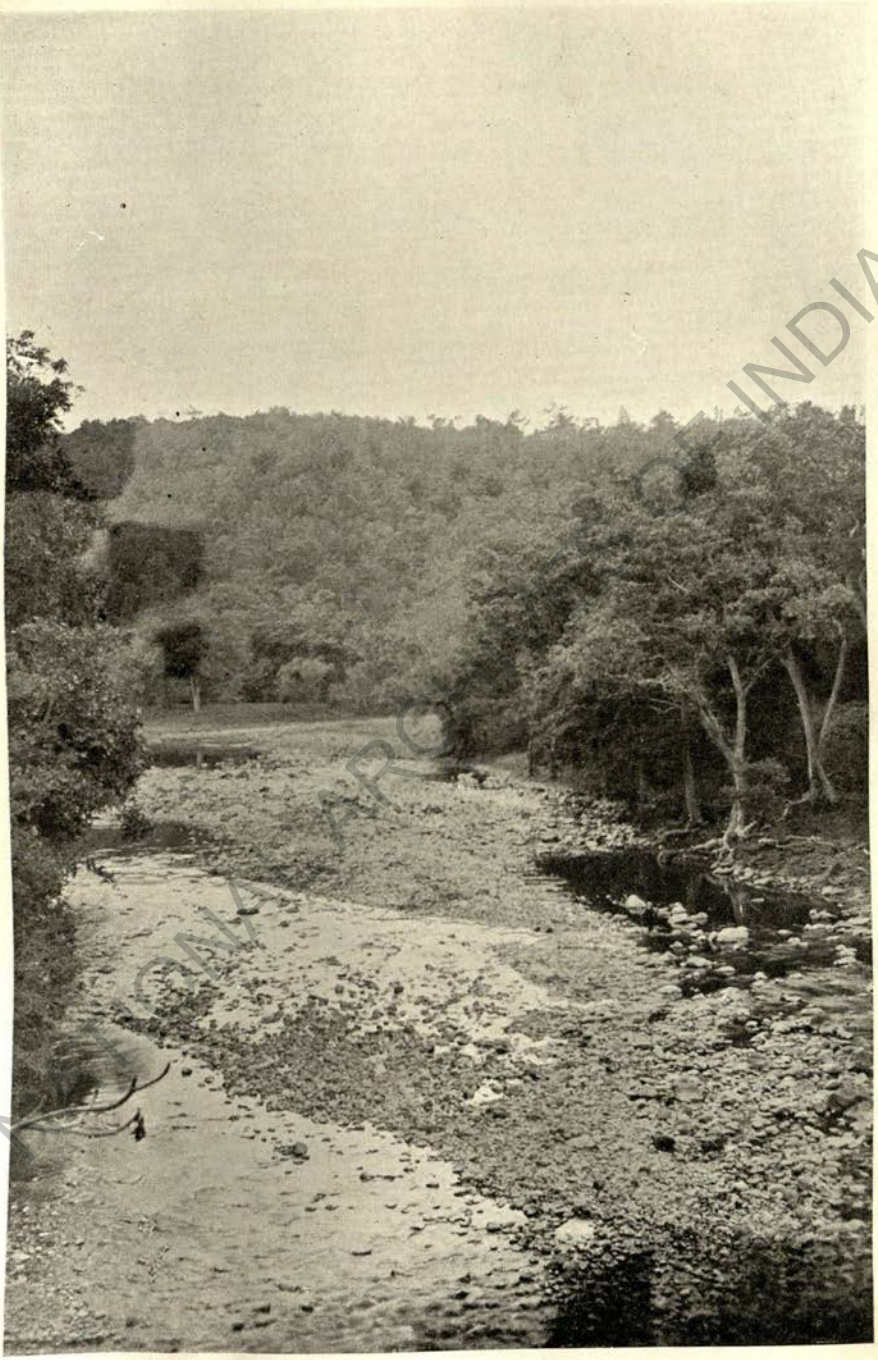

AFTER THE RAINY SEASON

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me a dig in the ribs. Toward the other youngsters his bearing was superciliously indifferent.

Life thus proceeded without much to mark its progress, save that my horns grew apace, and that the new master of the herd watched me with an ever-increasing ferocity, till one day he fell to the muzzle-loader of a native *shikári*. We had strayed incautiously near a *worli*, or landmark, when there came a flash and a bang, and my enemy sank to the ground, as the figure of a Bhíl rose from behind the smoke and ran towards him. As we fled leaping over the fields, there arose that same old gurgling bellow—and that was the last of my father's successor.

Two days after this a very fine buck took charge of us; and the first hour of office in his new capacity was devoted to driving me from the herd with which I had been connected from my infancy. He succeeded, although I was stubborn; and I at length departed, in dudgeon, with a slight horn wound in my flank. I may remark that my unnatural mother viewed me thus driven forth without apparent concern—another youngster now trotted by her side. Wandering morosely over the moonlit plain, I fell in with three other bucklets of my age, and on comparing notes we found that our condition was identical: each had the same story to tell, and we agreed to join our fortunes and face the world together. During the next few months others in the same plight joined us; thrust forth to seek our fortunes, a fellow-feeling drew us together.

In the course of our wanderings we had left the old country far behind, and one day found ourselves approaching a long line of trees that marked the straight, undeviating stretch of a trunk road. It was a glorious cold-weather morning. The air was cold and crisp. White rime lay on the yet misty fields, and the road, with its shading line of acacias, stretched away east to the dim grey horizon, where the early beams of the sun shot up into the clear green sky from behind a far cloud bank.

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As we moved about, nibbling a frond of fern-like gram here and there, a distant rumbling arose, and a thin curtain of dust among the trees; then the cheerful jingling of chains and harness as a battery of artillery came along at a smart trot opposite us. In obedience to a long-drawn-out word of command, they slowed to a walk and passed along the smooth road, the early sun glancing from steel and chain. Further on a short halt was made, and, seizing something from a syce, a figure left the road and came towards us. As we stared at the novel sight on the road, little puffs of smoke arose among the men and a hum of voices. The khaki-clad figure was getting near. I alone had heard of the dreaded *sahib*, and was well into my stride before the first bullet buzzed angrily over our heads off a stone. Then there came a second, and behind me a dull "plop"; and one of our number pitched on his head and lay kicking feebly.

None of us waited to see any more after that!

Nightfall found us again in the neighbourhood of the road, which, like the villages of the plain, possesses a strong attraction for us when Night has cast her cold dark mantle over the land.

Perhaps it would be the tinkle of bullock-carts, or the flicker of a roadside fire, lit by belated villagers returning from a distant market, or the steady *rub-a-dub-dub* of a village *tom-tom* rising on the still air. It is comforting, when the night comes down, to gather nearer the goings of man; and few of us lie far afield during the hours of dark.

I had picked up some useful wrinkles while a youngster with the herd, and now every day brought its experience. We learnt what to shun, and what was harmless. Bullock-carts laden with chattering natives might pass and repass us closely; but let one inch of a suspicious or skulking body show itself for an instant, and we were off.

One afternoon a fine buck joined us youngsters, which

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was unusual—but a long scar showed fresh on his haunch. And a sulky beast he was!

We had occupied the centre of an extensive cotton field that afternoon, and were most of us standing about, too lazy save for a chance nibble at the young leaves of the cotton plants. All to be seen of our morose friend were the points of his long horns, which protruded from the *palâti* stalks.

A figure emerged from behind some *bábúl* trees and strolled casually and confidently in our direction. It was certainly not a villager, but its advance was so careless, so artlessly guileless, that it had approached fairly close, and was passing on, when something prompted our long-horned acquaintance to rise and display all his black and white glory, as with proudly poised head he regarded the intruder in astonishment. I now recognised the figure of a *sahib*, and led a swift flight, the big buck bringing up the rear; when again came that dreaded sharp crack, and the laggard gave a lurch, but, pulling himself together, turned at right angles, and limped swiftly down the furrows of the cotton, a broken foreleg swinging crimson splashes against the brown stalks. And thus we separated. This episode afforded me a fresh insight into our enemies' wiles.

Some time after this I annexed a herd of does in a curiously accidental manner.

One morning, having become separated from our little coterie of bucklets, I had to canter from a village dog, and, further on, emerged from a palm-fringed *nála* to find myself almost among a herd of eight does, owned by a buck not much bigger than myself. Halting suddenly, I gazed at them; then, noticing a cousin among the does, took a few steps forward to greet her—when the master of the herd pushed his way up to me in a most offensive way.

Although his mien was threatening, and the pose of his thick neck extremely choleric, I put a stiff upper lip and

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firmly curled-up tail on the situation, and awaited his attack. When a couple of paces off he halted, and we stared at each other, legs braced well up and eyepits distended: then he quivered with rage; and, licking his lips, fixed me with a glare, advanced a step or two with studied deliberation, suddenly lowered his horns, and rushed fiercely at me.

I met his charge with firm resistance, and our heads came together with a crack! It was now a question of sheer weight and strength; and, bracing my muscular hams, I yielded not an inch. After some prolonged but ineffectual efforts on the part of my antagonist, he suddenly bounded back in surprise and annoyance; and we again stood facing each other, nostrils dilated and flanks heaving. Again and again he attacked me, with the same result, to his increasing chagrin. Round and round he fenced, and shoved, and slipped; at length, being extremely short of wind, he halted to think, and, having pondered, was moving back to the herd with what dignity he could manage.

But I had not quite done with him yet, and he only just saved his bacon as I engaged him and forced him back; then with a fierce effort I bore him to his knees, and as he leaped back, exposing his side, made a rapid rush, and a despairing grunt left his panting throat as my horns took him in the flanks.

After this it was a mere pursuit. He never faced me again as I chevied him over the fields. Then, the fire of conquest burning in my eye, I left him disconsolately gazing from a respectful distance, and stepped proudly towards my does.

When the moon rose late that night it disclosed the dethroned one still following us; but by morning he had disappeared.

I was now the master of a herd—the ambition of every right-minded buck—and life passed, unmarked by episode,

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except when I had to fight for my property, or when I added to its numbers. Some two years must have passed thus; and by this time I was, I flatter myself, one of the finest bucks in the countryside. My horns were over twenty-four inches in length, and were strong and thick; my colour a dark brown-grey, for I am of the caste that never assumes the intense black of the smaller breed—and my bulk and weight have stood me in good stead.

The country where I found myself finally settled is within fifteen miles of a small military station which lies nearer the range of hills to the north, and it is visited now and again by *sahibs*. Thus far I had escaped being fired at by observing the simple rules which every wide-awake buck should have at his command; but of late times I too have had my experiences in this line. For the guidance of other bucks I should observe that one should be particularly wide awake on Thursdays and Sundays—it is on such days that most of my narrow shaves have occurred. They have been so many now that I can recollect few of the circumstances connected with them.

One day I saw a *sahib* standing in the distance. He wore a white hat with a spotted blue *pagri*, and was accompanied by a native in khaki, with whom he was in deep consultation. I was so tickled that I did not take particular care of myself, and the apparition approached: then, after turning once more anxiously to the native, whom I distinctly heard say "*Ap ki khushi*," it bent its back, and, assuming a stealthy gait, crept towards me. It had not gone far when it suddenly remembered something, and, retracing its uncomfortable way, took something from the native, and put it with a loud click in the rifle.

Then it resumed its broken-backed approach. Fascinated by this weird method of "stalking," I stared and stared, till the figure rose and fumbled with its gun: then, as it was possible that it might be pointed somewhere near me when it exploded, I moved off.

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Bang! and a fragment of an express bullet, ricochetting off the hard ground, rushed shrilly by me. *Bang!* and another bullet whispered high over my head; and in the distance a line of women, picking cotton, stood up with frightened faces. I glanced back. My sportsman was gazing sadly after me! I have seen him do so many a time; and, later, I came to know him well. Many a dull half-hour has he enlivened! I look for his white *tópi* on Thursdays and Sundays as a relief to the monotony of my existence. Once he brought a very fat *sahib* with him, who wounded me; but I got away, and am all right now.

My last adventure was of a different type. One Thursday I was making across a field some way behind my does, when a slight movement caught my eye;-it was the *tópi* of a *sahib*, and he was lying behind a little mound. Of course, I was off at my best pace, until I had put 300 yards between us: this I always considered perfect safety, so I wheeled, and stood to have another look.

Something shone dully behind the mound for an instant, then tipped suddenly up, and, simultaneously, "*Tuck!*" came a slight report—a mere crack—somewhere in the air above me, and a searing pain cut along the lower edge of my belly. It was only a graze; but the frightful force with which the bullet twanged off the ground, far beyond me, with a peculiar high-pitched pinging sound, and the absence of the usual smoke from behind the mound, told me of a new destructive force, and one to be terribly feared.

I am getting on in years now, and, I suppose, in spite of my watchful does, shall some day fall to the *sahib* with that strange new rifle. And a worthy spoil shall I make. A twenty-five-inch head; a fine glossy coat, which I have defended unscarred through hundreds of hard-fought fights; a buck worth bagging!

And, if I fall, may it be fairly! Stalk me fairly, *sahib!*

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Don't come skulking after me in a bullock-cart. Don't wait for me by the tank in the hot weather. And, should my head ever grace your walls, do not forget the many days of quiet sport I have afforded you on my wide rich plains, the glamour of which will surely return to you, even amidst the stirring memories of more exciting days.

Shoot none of my immature brethren, *sahib!* If you must kill for food, take a few of my yeld-does; I can spare them—else how think you will the country raise bucks like me?

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A NIGHT BY A JUNGLE POOL

EVENING shadows were lengthening apace, and the last mellow shafts of the declining sun bathed the jungly hillside in a warm glow and threw into relief the heavy heads of the scattered mango trees under which we passed—a silent party of four—as we wound in file down the little woodcutter's path, through the long yellow spear-grass, leading to the already hazy bed of the stream some hundreds of feet below.

It was past seven o'clock, and an hour since I had left camp, with the intention of passing the night of the full moon at a solitary pool, deep in the heart of a great ravine, several miles from any other water, and in this parching Indian hot weather the last resource as a drinking-place of all the game within a long distance.

The ravine into which we were descending forms the headwaters of a large tributary of the Tapti River, and is a deep and fiercely raging torrent in the rainy weather. Like most of its neighbours, it has a short course over more or less flat-topped plateaux, from whose edge it plunges over a precipice of black basalt into a deep glen winding a couple of thousand feet below, in a tangle of miasmatic vegetation. Shrinking up quickly through the cold-season months, the commencement of the hot weather sees but a few scattered pools in all its mountain course, and a couple of months more of fierce sun exhausts all moisture, save a solitary puddle or two in such spots as

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are favoured by peculiar geological conditions for the retention of water.

All that now remains of the verdure of the rainy season is the mass of dead scorched creepers, festooning the bare trunks and leafless branches of forest trees, only a few of which throw out a thick head of sappy young leaves at this period.

The general appearance of these jungles is that of English woods in October—thin on the steep exposed slopes of now parched and beaten-down spear-grass, dense and thicketty in the ravines seaming their sides.

Along the dry boulder-strewn bed of the stream rises a fringe of larger, taller trees, opening into little occasional bays or natural clearings; and the entire forest is carpeted, often knee-deep, with the great dried and fallen leaves of the teak and other trees. In such ground not a step may be taken in silence. On the other hand, game which might otherwise have escaped notice betrays itself here by its movement through the loud-crackling leaves.

In those parts game is scarce and wary; and to anyone who would condemn me as a poacher I would recommend a few days in the dense and hard-to-work jungles of which I speak. If you cannot come to your game, why not let it come to you, which is, after all, the *raison d'être* of beating or driving. Besides this, there is a certain great charm in a night vigil, such as I hope to describe, understood that you don't smoke heavily or open sodas with a noisy gurgling every half-hour, and then go to sleep condemning it all as a fraud.

We had taken the precaution of "stopping" this pool for the past two nights, by the simple expedient of a couple of jungle men and a smouldering cowdung fire placed a hundred yards or so up the glen. My Korkus reported that on the second night they had spent most of their time in a tree, as a tiger had shown extreme impatience at being baulked of his water, and had prowled round and round

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within a short distance of the pool, giving vent to his disappointment in low growls.

I thought I knew this tiger—a shy, wily game-killer, who had evaded many a carefully devised beat, and who had been the cause of much bad language and disappointment for the past two years at least.

But here we are! An abrupt descent over large piled-up boulders, and we are soon at the water's edge, which lies below a flat out-cropping ledge of black trap-rock; sand along the north side, and the steep fall of a precipitous bank lining the far shore. Here, some fifteen feet up, is our hide, on the summit of a jumble of great rocks, and hedged around with *jamún* bushes—unnoticeable and natural to a degree.

My orderly called my attention to the fact that a herd of sámbar had been down during the day, since the Korkus had left in the morning. They had not been able to withstand further the claims of a fierce thirst, although they are able to let a couple of days at least elapse between drinks. The sámbar is very partial to water, however, especially for the sake of a good wallow in the mire. There were also traces of other animals, pigs, and, strangely enough, a bear. He must have been hard up to stir after the hot sun had risen. Then, of course, there were numerous marks of the little four-horned antelope and barking deer. These nearly always choose noontide to slake their thirst, tripping with daintily picked and fearful footsteps to the cool damp sand that fringes the forest pool. We examined the ground carefully for the tiger's tracks, so as to try to obtain a hint from which direction to expect him; but the hard withered grass and fallen leaves afforded no information.

As the last glow of dying day fades from the peaks above us, the night chorus of goatsuckers strike up their refrain of "*Chuckoo—chuckoo—chuckoo!*" and many small birds come and sip, and flit about, rejoicing that the torrid

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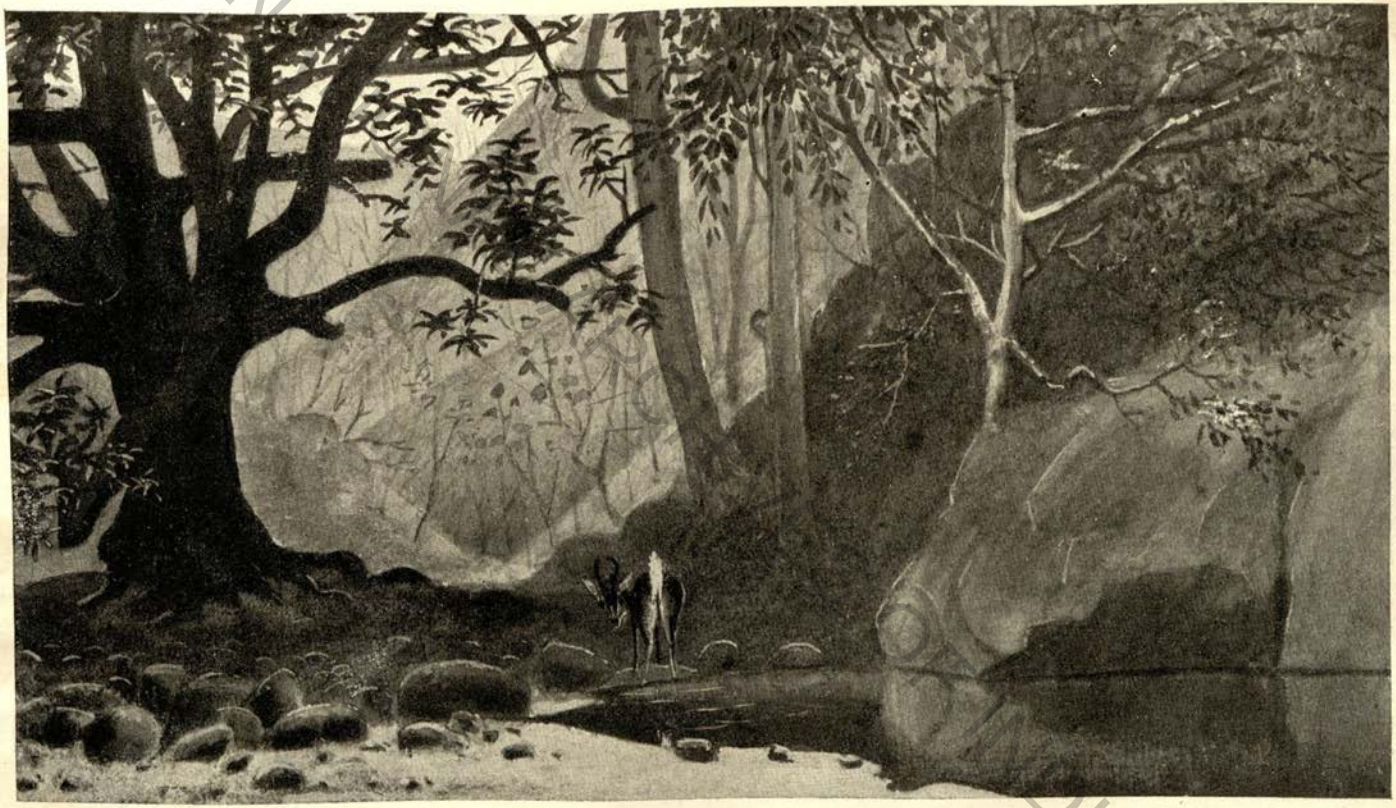

A JUNGLE POOL

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fervour of the day is past. Abbás Khán and I mount to our hiding-place, and the Korkus, having deposited their burdens, and bearing their little gourd water-bottles, disappear uphill, where we long hear their feet crackling the great dry teak leaves, in the warm still air.

The rug is spread, haversack and water *chagal* put ready to hand, rifles and binoculars disposed handily, a few extra cartridges laid in that little niche in the black rock—and we are ready. What a charm is in this delicious quiet, this heavy-scented air, and the curious cries of the jungle breaking the profound silence! The little barbet has changed his day "coppersmith" note for the no less monotonous and everlasting nocturnal one of "*Ouic—kur-kur!*" and, as the shadows deepen, a large fluffy mass sails noiselessly overhead, and settles on the gaunt arm of a dead tree, answering a distant call by a deep "*Whoo!*"

I was lost in a reverie, watching the orange disc of the full moon lift over a shoulder of the hills, when the extreme right-hand corner of my eye caught a grey shadow hesitatingly approaching among some rocks in the dry bed of the stream, and the glasses revealed a hyæna nosing about near the place where we had come down off the hill. He then stood, cocking his strange pointed ears in our direction for some time, but finally limped up right under our rock—a fine big fellow, with a good coat. By leaning over we might have almost touched him with a stick. After drinking he went off downstream.

Later, a little barking deer came rustling in the teak leaves on the far side of the *nal*, and down to the edge of the water; and another, further off, moving here and there, kept up his funny little yap of "*Aow! . . . Aow!*" Higher rose the moon in a perfectly cloudless sky, and the gentle breaths of air died away until every stick and blade of grass stood out sharp and clear in the brilliant light. Small bats wheeled and circled with soft whirring wings over the dark pool, ever and anon kissing the glassy surface

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in a downward swoop. Why is it that moonlight should throw such mystery over the woods? The slightest sound appears to be a loud and startling uproar, and the occasional scratching indulged in by Abbás Khán as if it would be sufficient warning to all animals for miles.

Curious small noises come and go in the dry leaves, and two tiny owls cause quite a stir as they softly alight on a slender teak pole, which has a few huge dried leaves attached to its topmost twigs.

The mind, too, is gently influenced by the quiet scene, and wonders how there can be such things as rage and strife. Why should life not glide thus peacefully on, without jar, in calm beatitude!

The ear catches a far-distant, gentle stirring in the carpeting of dry teak leaves, now dying away, and then again increasing, coming nearer, stopping, recommencing. The sounds come from the lower portion of that long steep spur which runs from the little level vale of yellow grass right up to the soft, indistinct distance of crag-encircled plateaux far above us.

The colours of the sleeping landscape, though restricted to blues, greys, and palest yellow, are still marvellously diverse in tone: there the rich soft blue-black of some deep ravine; here the sharp dark branches of a gnarled *tiwas* tree in high relief against a pale background of long, withered grass.

The crackling of leaves is more pronounced now, and the binoculars are raised to the dark line of forest where it touches the grass land. Nothing shows for many long minutes.

At length a tall black object is spied moving slowly forward, and after a while it steps into a patch of moonlight, which falls through the twisted boughs, and appears to view—a fine old sámbar stag, with newly-sprouted horns in "velvet." A tall *salai* tree is before him, and here he pauses and raises his muzzle; then, leaning side-

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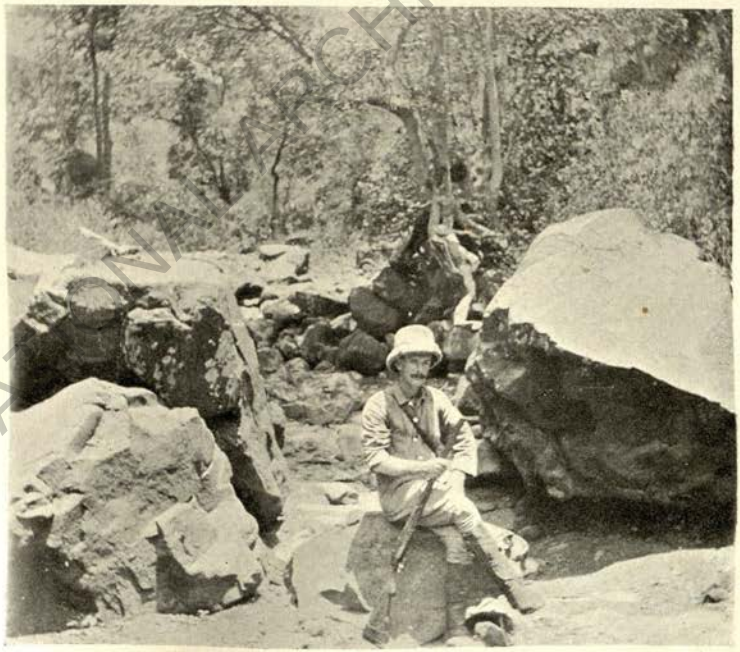
A LIKELY BIT OF TIGER COVERT



IN THE JUNGLE

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wise, scrapes his rough hide luxuriously against the bark.

Tiring of this exercise, the stately measured walk is recommenced, and he feeds slowly off, over a little glade, and gradually disappears in the labyrinth of ghostly yellow trunks. He is probably one of those who drank at our pool to-day, and so is indifferent to water for the next forty-eight hours or thereabouts, though he may turn up in the hour before dawn for a roll and mud-bath.

The sound of his wandering steps in the leaves dies gradually away, and all is again still, save for the eternal "*Chuckoo—chuckoo!*" of the nightjars, and their prolonged cry of "*Hoo—hoo—hoo!*" as they flit and sail from tree to tree, rock to rock.

One of the most exciting bits of this night work is the waiting to see what it is that for the last half-hour has been moving towards the pool through the tell-tale leaves, and now emerges, and halts—a dark, shapeless mass—on the edge of the jungle.

Perhaps it were hardly interesting to record how several sounders of hog—boar, sows, and many little squeakers—approached, wallowed, drank, and finally trotted off, grunting satisfaction, to where their favourite roots were to be had for the grubbing; how a pair of jackals arrived, and while one danced a remarkably fantastic fandango in a sandhole, how its mate discovered some brooding danger, and, the signal given, how the pair disappeared, with many a suspicious halt and backward stare—all this in the effulgence of a full tropic moon.

I took out my note-book and pencilled little notes. I smoked gently, for I hold that—except under certain circumstances of position and wind—when tobacco smoke can be detected, the natural perfume of he who smokes not would be no less noticeable.

Many a night had I passed in this *al fresco* manner: but never a one when all so combined to please, and

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when I had such chances of observing unsuspicious wild creatures.

I was lying back on the bed of boughs, grass, comfortable rug and cushion, when a long, cold, trailing thing passed over my hand, and away from under my hips, leaving the hairs of my head in a state of electric separation. When the slight rustling had receded well into some rocks, I again drew breath, and quickly removed my haversack of cold roast fowl and other delicacies to another spot. Whether of a deadly species or not, I object to snakes hunting for *murghi* in my pockets!

It was now well past 2 a.m., and I felt drowsy, especially as the tuneful breathing of my faithless disciple sounded like a lullaby in my ears.

Perhaps an hour or so had passed in this borderland of dreams, when a sound struck on my ears that instantly roused us both; it was the sudden, sharp, rending, trumpet sound of a sámbar's bell. "*Dhánk!*" There it came again, from up the glen, and continued at intervals, apparently retreating slowly for some minutes, when all was again quiet; then another bark, louder and much nearer, and the crashing of leaves and jungle, as the sámbar apparently moved rapidly uphill.

Pulses beat quicker now in keen anticipation, for this kind of thing has but one meaning.

Two figures, dark and stiff, peered over the lip of the rock, the glint of moonlight on a double-barrelled ·577. There came the deepest of guttural sighs from the big black boulder under the far clump of bamboo.

The moon shone on, and the watch ticked loudly in my pocket, and we waited—weary work, with all senses at highest pressure.

Five minutes must have passed thus.

Ah!—a stone turned then—and now the moon's rays fall on the white face and chest of a tiger as he moves out of the blackness and comes gently forward; a rather

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small and lightly made brute, but with twice the grace and elegance of the beef-eater of the plains.

He comes to a sudden halt, moving his head slowly from side to side. Perhaps a slight human taint reached him, but it apparently escapes notice, for, pausing but a little while, he passes straight to the water; the powerful shoulder-blades work under his glossy coat as he crouches like a great cat; and down goes his head to lap.

Gently, ever so gently, the rifle comes to the shoulder, and the white card sight on the muzzle stands out well in the moonlight.

A sudden star of bright sparks, a struggling and a rolling, and then a "*Woof!*" as *bang!* goes the left barrel at a vanishing streak of faint grey which flashes up over the dark rocks and is gone.

Caution and quiet were now unnecessary, and as we discussed the *pros* and *cons* of a hit or miss, I treated myself to a well-merited whisky and soda, and turned in for a snooze. I slept till awakened by the words repeated in Hindustani: "*Hazúr*, the fate of the tiger has come to pass!"—my orderly being, as befitted a pious Moslem, a firm believer in *kismat*—and, sitting up with the fresh breeze of dawn fanning my cheek, felt rather grubby after the long, warm hours of night in this close ravine. The men were washing their mouths, noisy native fashion, in the far pool; and grey jungle-cocks called defiance from every side. Little parties of them and of the sombre spur-fowl pattered in the leaves round the head of the pool.

Sitting thus, a movement in the limbs of a tall tree beyond the *nála* attracted my attention, and shortly two dark lithe objects appeared, chasing each other up and down the long branches, against the beautiful green flush of the young day. At length they scurried up to the topmost twig, whence one, detaching itself, sailed with a steady downward flight straight over my head, and, curving

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upwards again like a hawk, alighted softly on the gnarled trunk of a *kowa* tree; its mate, answering its curiously harsh cry, followed suit, and, as they disappeared in the grey twilight, it struck me that I had lost a chance of adding a flying squirrel to my collection. Their flight was wonderfully easy and graceful, and they must have covered about fifty yards clear from tree to tree.

A sluice in the clear water, and a bite of food was followed by the matutinal cigarette, as the hair and splashes of blood on the boulders were examined; and then a start was made.

The tracks led uphill into an extremely thickly jungled little *khóra*. We passed a spot where the tiger had rolled in agony, while his erratic course and the bits of white hair from his chest on any stumps or rocks in his way showed us all was well. As the men picked up the easily read trail, I kept a sharp look-out ahead, rifle at the ready; and so we crept along, under some bushes, round a rock here, through a tangle of small bamboos there, until at last there he lay on his side, thirty yards away, apparently quite dead.

Turning silently to the men, I motioned the Korkus back, tipped a wink to Abbás Khán, and took the little white patch under the forearm. Over the smoke a huge tawny form rose up, glared in our direction, and then all was a chaos of gleaming teeth, viciously laid back ears, and flying leaves, as we darted behind a thick tree. Round he came; rolling, falling, rising, doing his best to get at us, when another bullet caught him in the back—and all was over.

When the shivering Korkus had come off their trees, we turned the tiger over, and saw that last night's bullet had struck full in the chest, but, owing to my raised position, had merely run along not far below the skin. It was subsequently found lodged below the stomach. To my surprise he measured nine feet as he lay.

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An hour later, as I passed slowly up the precipitous spur leading to the plateau and camp, and took a breather ere climbing the little mural precipice which skirts the flat tops of these hills, my eye fell with grateful recollections on the glint of the little pool, now a thousand feet below in the yet dark glen, which had afforded me one of the pleasantest nights of my life.

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BY TAMARIND AND MHOWA

ALTHOUGH all the signs of an Indian "hot weather" surround us, the sun is not yet high enough to assert his stern authority, and long shadows still lie across the stretch of withered jungle-grass which now clothes the deserted fields surrounding the ruins of Pípaldá.

On that knoll once stood the village, under its shady tamarind trees. The great trees are still there, but the crumbled mud walls and the track of the path leading past the old *mhowa* tree to the waterhole in the neighbouring *nála*, whence the inhabitants drew their scanty summer supply of the precious fluid, have long since disappeared; for it is many years since Pípaldá, together with three or four other hamlets, was declared *ujár*, deserted, to make way for the growth of this little *bandi*, or forest reserve, some eight or nine square miles in extent, set apart by the *Sarkár* for the supply of grass and small timber to the surrounding cultivated tracts.

These little *bandis* lie scattered about a certain district not very far from—Nagpur shall we say?—and in years past have yielded the most extraordinary amount of game, chiefly tigers and spotted deer, for the sheltering of which they are ideally adapted.

Whether they will ever recover from the terrible famine year of 1900—when the *ungulata* actually invaded villages in search of fodder and water, and were knocked on the head in great numbers by the famishing country-people—

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remains to be seen, and appears doubtful; but in days not so very long ago they formed a kind of sportsman's paradise.

Composed for the most part of waist-high lemon-grass, studded with copsewood, amid which here and there rises the handsome, oak-like, sweet-flowering *mhowa*, these reserves are usually traversed by a sandy *nála*, in which will be found one or two perennial pools. These winding water-courses are fringed by a strip of the larger woodland trees, such as the mango, *kowa*, banyan, *anjan*, etc., and the ground is, for the greater part, a dead flat, rendering it no difficult matter for one unacquainted with its few natural features to lose his way, although not seriously, yet in a manner sufficiently exhausting under an Indian summer sun.

Fairly level ground, shade, water, the proximity of some cultivation, and the usually undisturbed quiet of their solitude, render these small forest blocks quite exceptionally suited to the requirements of the graceful chital, and of truly wondrous numbers of hog, which, in their turn, serve to attract the felines that prey on them. As a rule, at least a couple of tigers and a family or two of panthers were to be found in each of those *bandis*.

The writer will long remember the first early morning stroll he took in one of those delightful bits of woodland. We were engaged in visiting a distant corner of the forest, where two of our tiger-baits had been tied out the previous evening, and after a cup of coffee had left camp, on foot, at the earliest flush of the "false dawn." That it is *hot* in those parts during April and May cannot be denied, and the fierce midday hours sadly sap the strength of the exotic exile; but, at this early dawn, newly-aroused nature enjoys the coolest of all the twenty-four hours, and a light dew has fallen, giving a fresh appearance to the parched surroundings.

The Indian hot-weather season has a somewhat similar

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effect on the countryside to that of autumn frosts in England. There the excess of cold, here the excess of heat, strips most trees of their foliage, and withers the grass, leaving a few evergreens here and there among wide stretches of bare-twigged coppices; and the heat-haze of India produces an effect not unlike that seen in frosty woods at home, when a blood-red sun is rising through misty vistas of leafless trees—an example of the truth of the adage, "Extremes meet."

Such is the general appearance of the jungle this morning.

Camp is pitched not far from a small village, in a plot of garden land. The fresh, newly-grown foliage of large tamarind trees shades our little 80-lb. tent. Hard by there is a fine old masonry well, with the inevitable *mót*, or water-raising apparatus. Unless engaged in a beat for tiger, the hot hours of the day—and it is blistering hot now between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.—are usually passed in camp.

Tents—especially the modest shelter of the wandering *shikári*—are of course unbearable at these hours; but by erecting a *mandwa*, or thickly thatched roof on tall uprights, the camp table and bed may be set in the breeze, hot though it be, and the time passed not unpleasantly, in scanty attire, with a siesta thrown in to compensate for early and late hours. There may be the old jungle diary in which to jot down some interesting experience—the sketch-book—private correspondence—a novel—the photographic apparatus. Meanwhile the bullocks pace slowly at their allotted task at the well, and the heavily rising leather water-bag discharges its cool contents with a soothing gush into the reservoir, and from it along grass-fringed channels to irrigate the little plots of summer vegetables. An old man sleepily drives the bullocks, crooning a monotonous air the while, and urging them with occasional eldritch yells.

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I suppose most of us are aware of the existence of a certain demon of mischief that haunts our daily life. I mean the small household gnome who is directly responsible for many of our petty worries—who hides the penknife, or cigar-case, or book which we have for a moment put down, and is very fond of match-boxes. I made a distinct score off him at this camp.

I was shooting entirely with a ·303 magazine sporting rifle at the time, my new ·400 bore cordite rifle having failed to arrive from England to date; and I had sold my ·577 and another blunderbuss type of obsolete artillery to buy the same ·400. I was, therefore, temporarily dependent entirely on my one barrel.

The "pull-off" of the little rifle had become a trifle heavier than I like, so, urged doubtless by my particular familiar fiend, I stripped the action. Having readjusted some matters, I was engaged in replacing the sear spring, which actuates both the trigger and the catch holding the magazine. At this moment my companion was startled from slumber by a loud expletive. The spring had snapped!

I can see the little camp under the big tamarinds now, myself sitting gazing out on the heat-shimmering jungle, with that tiny broken bit of steel in my palm. Wild plans chased each other through my head, each to be discarded in turn. Here I was in the heart of India, weeks away from new springs, and not overmuch leave to get through. For the want of that little bit of steel, my tigers would roam all round camp at their ease. I pictured my companion's return, laden with trophies, while I sat in camp alone, or blew out the choke of my beautiful gun with ill-fitting and wobbly-flighted spherical balls. Over it all rose the thin sardonic chuckle of the household gnome!

An hour later my orderly, his knees tucked into my pony's ribs, was fleeing east to the least distant railway station, near which were sundry workshops. However,

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the buffer spring of a locomotive was scarcely calculated to allay my trouble—which continued.

My despairing gaze fell on the open rifle-case. An old spare "cocking-piece," with its long spiral striker-spring, lay therein. Now spiral springs *can* be cut with a sharp screw-driver sometimes; they are also capable of uniting two given points nearly as well as a V-shaped spring. Melted alum will firmly unite separate pieces of metal, especially if aided by a "frapping" of common or garden thread.

I stole a glance, drooping my left eyelid slightly the while, at my household troll. He was dejectedly springing, squirrel-like, round the bole of a tree.

Half an hour later my scantily-clothed companion protruded a red and astounded countenance through the flap of his tent, and as the Lee-Metford bolt clicked merrily a second time, and I "snapped" the repaired lock again and again in my glee, a faint howl from the tamarind leaves intimated the complete rout of a discomfited elf. Strange to relate, the rifle so repaired gave perfect satisfaction during the remainder of that trip, accounting for bears, panthers, and tigers.

To return to the jungles of Pípaldá.

Crossing the fallow ground beyond the village, we passed the burnt strip of the "fire-line," and entered the reserve by a rough cart-track, along which we moved for some distance in soft, cotton-soled silence.

After a while we became aware of movement in the grass and bushes alongside, and came to a halt. An excursion through the yellow grass disclosed a huge sounder of hogs. Of all sizes were they, from heavy boars to squeakers, wandering and rustling gently homewards towards the deeper jungle, their line stretching at least a hundred and fifty yards in extent. After watching one splendid old boar, with the prism binoculars, which brought his formidable head almost within touching distance, we gently withdrew and regained the track.

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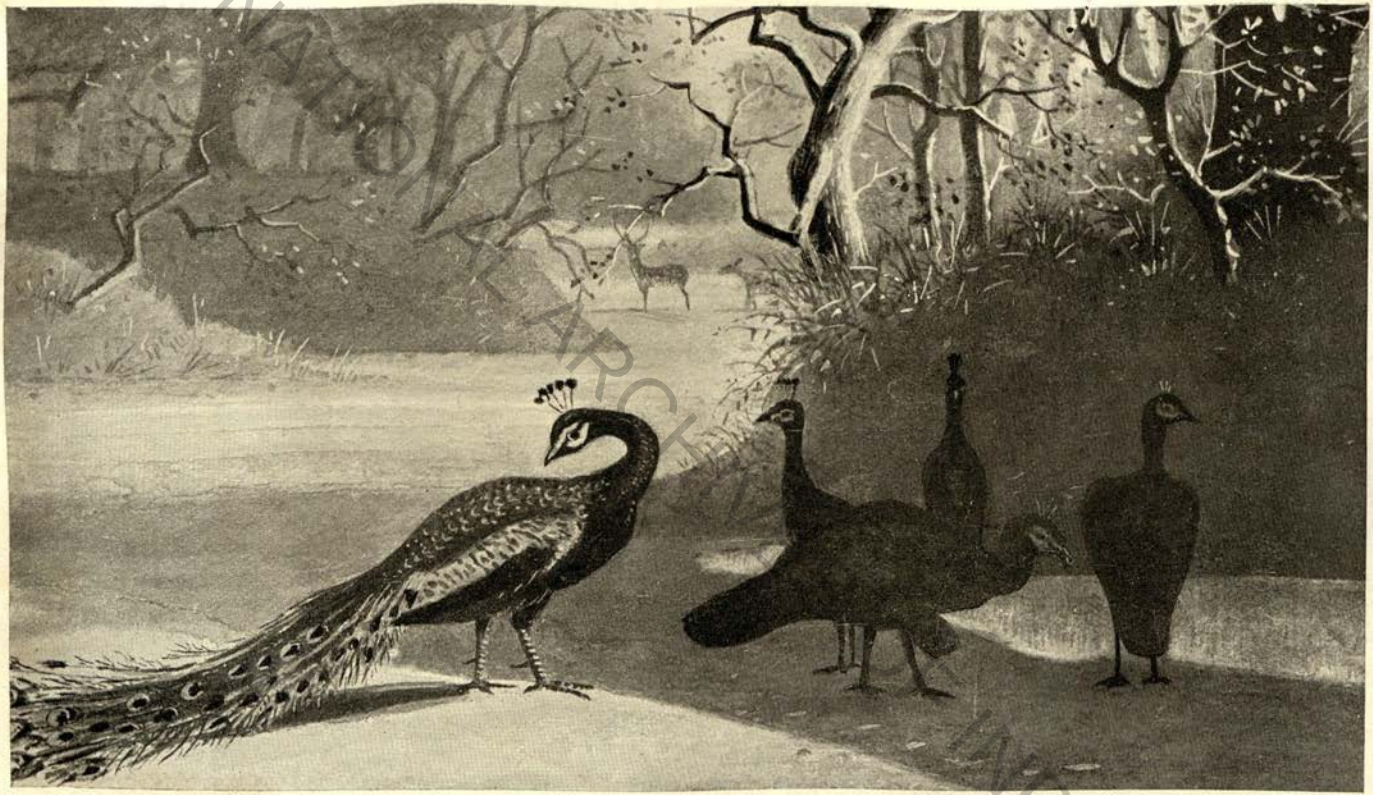

A CORNER IN THE SANDY WAY

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The light is growing rapidly now, and a fringe of green trees not far ahead marks the main *nála*.

As we arrive on its steep banks there is a sharp grating whistle—"*Phrew!*" and a hind chital darts up the far side, and, with a couple of bounds, disappears in long grass.

We stand there, gazing upstream and down. The plaintive cry of a distant peacock echoes through the quiet woods.

We drop on to the smooth sand of the watercourse. No crackling leaves underfoot here; and in perfect silence one may wander along its winding reaches. Damply, refreshingly cool it is under the arching trees as we brush past green *jámún* and tamarisk coverts that fill portions of the dry stream-bed. A *koel's* mellow fluting resounds from the boughs overhead, gilded now by the low rays of the newly-risen sun. There is a corner in the sandy way just ahead of us; turned cautiously, it reveals a vista of sylvan beauty. In the deep shade of the opposite bank lies one of those occasional pools, and on the moist sand of its margin—one instant only is the picture limned on the retina before the keen-eyed birds take swift alarm—groups a bevy of sombre peahens, their magnificent mate preening the burnished armour of his plumage, as he stands on a little sand bank, with the early sunlight playing on him in a myriad tints of blended colour!

And what is that movement far down the dim distance?—a chital! A stag too!—slowly crossing from bank to bank. More of them! Cannot we steal nearer?—to observe, not to slay, for the jungle must remain undisturbed till we encompass that tiger's undoing. Wait till the whole herd—there must be at least forty or fifty deer—cross and ascend the other bank; then steal down this silent, sandy floor, and creep up its sloping sides.

As we raise our heads over the tall red grasses, there rises before us the drooping foliage of the big tamarinds of deserted Pípaldá. There is the old *mhowa* tree—its

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lately fruit-stripped branches flecked with the transparent gold of budding leaves, and, nearer us, knee deep in the coarse grasses of the little clearing, moves the herd of spotted deer in its capricious ways.

The chital have now reached their home, having, no doubt, lately made their way into the *bandi* from a nocturnal visit to the open fields outside. These old village sites are always attractive to the *ungulata*, and are a sure find for chital throughout the day, until the cool of evening tempts them from the shade to wander slowly through the forest towards their nightly feeding-grounds. Then it is that the silence of the dark hours is broken by the braying of the stags or sharp whistling of the hinds.

Here, then, is the herd at home, as yet unconscious of our presence; and far may one travel to match so fair a sight. It would be superfluous to recall the oft-penned claim of that perfect little stag to first place among all the graceful family *Cervidæ*. He possesses it without a doubt, beyond all cavil, as he stands there, unconsciously posing as a faultless picture of colouring and grace of form—those lines of a beautiful shapely frame—the light brown muzzle and dark eyes—the rich deep russet of that snow-flecked hide, and those long beaded horns, sweeping back in a curve and terminating in shining polished tips—certainly the most beautiful of the deer tribe!

And his surroundings? While falling little short of the beauties of an English park-land, they are those of nature, free and untrammelled; enclosed by no ring fence, guarded by no trespass notice—and all ours!

But something has warned the sharp instinct of a hind that all is not as it should be—some sense of brooding danger—a fitful curl of betraying breeze. "*Phrew!*" sounds the warning signal—"*Phrew! phrew!*" and in an instant there is a quick flashing of dappled hides.

The herd is gone! Beyond the knoll of Pípaldá a

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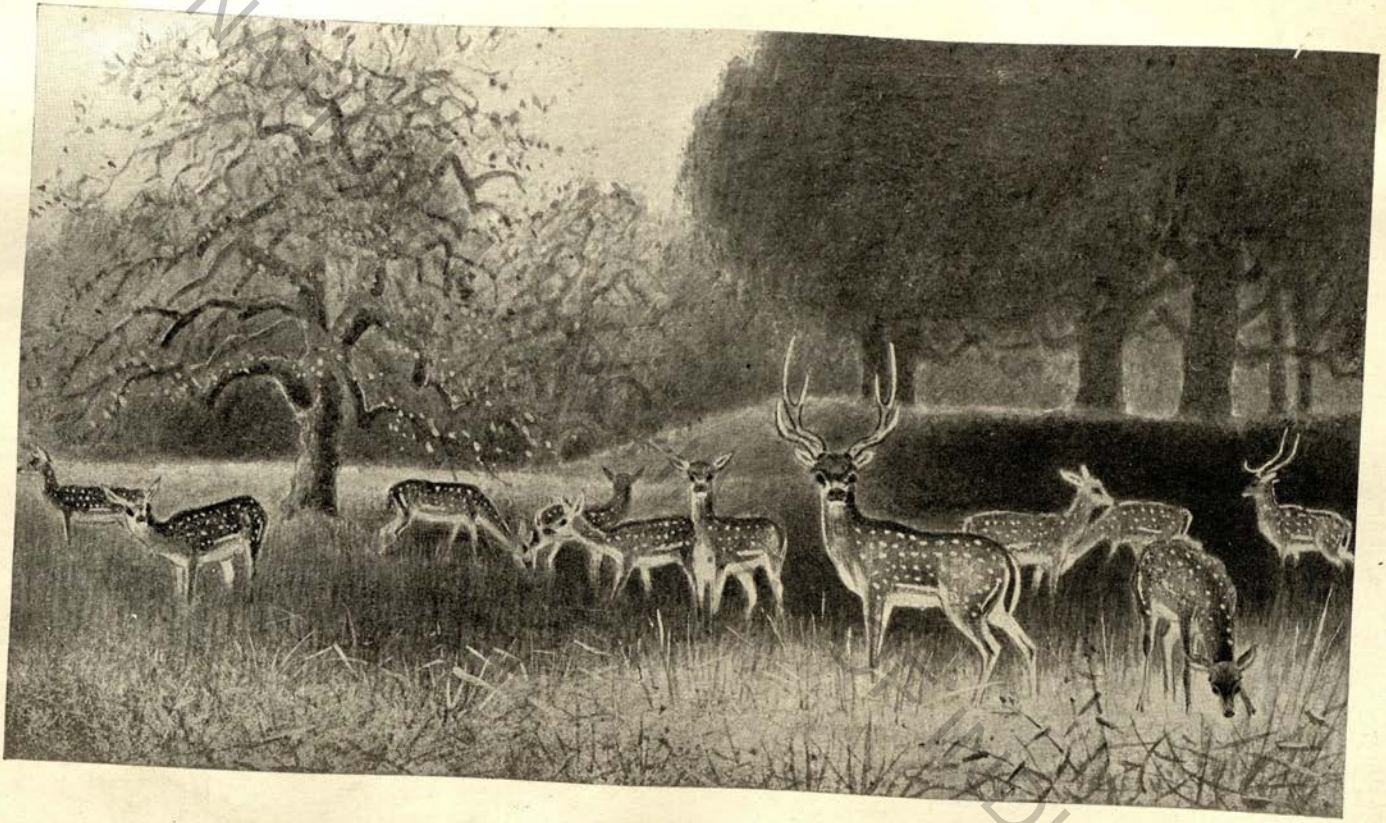

THAT PERFECT STAG

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distant glint proclaims the line taken by our stag. He will not go far, however; and, sad to relate, we shall certainly return to secure that splendid pair of horns.

While their watering habits vary slightly, according to the situation of the necessary fluid, chital may be said to drink twice a day—at dawn and about sunset.

If covert is nigh, whence a deadly rush may bring a feline foe, their approach to water is an extraordinary sight. The writer once spent a moonlit night in a tree, sitting up for a tiger, and was awaiting the arrival of his men from camp ere descending to earth. All night long the chital stags had been braying and polishing their antlers against trees in the surrounding woods, and now, with the first green flush of dawn, a large body of spotted deer, ever gregarious, gathered hesitatingly on the bank above the pool, which lay almost directly below our *machán*.

At last a wary old hind slowly descended the steep bank, lifting cautious feet with a comical high-stepping action; and halted half-way down.

Suddenly she whistled, and bolted up the bank; and the whole herd darted out of sight into the jungle.

After some time they slowly collected again. This time the hind got as far as the sandy bed of the little river, when she sounded another alarm—and off they all went a second time.

Returning once more, the whole scene was re-enacted, with this exception, that as several deer had now got close to the pool, there was a bigger and more complete stampede when the warning whistle went.

At length, either having tired of false alarms or being satisfied that these their efforts to force a lurking enemy to disclose his position would have met with success had he been there, the herd descended the bank in earnest, and crowded to the water's edge; but the timid creatures spent nearly all their time in lowering their heads and sharply

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raising them again, while several false alarms and partial stampedes occurred. The final scene came certainly before all could possibly have quenched their thirst; and this time a frantic, helter-skelter retreat, accompanied by a chorus of barks and whistles, scattered the herd for good.

Their alarm was no ill-founded one, for a family of three tigers prowled this river-bed, and one had passed this very pool during the preceding night; while tigers' pugs were thickly imprinted in the moist sand, and the whitening bones of many a chital lay in the grass around.

The coverts in those small detached *bandis*, like that of Pipaldá, are so few and so simple to work, and an animal is so easily located by an examination of the one or two rare pools still left in the parched jungle, that tigers were usually bagged there without much difficulty. Sometimes it would be one's fortune to come across a tiger and shoot him practically single-handed, without the aid of an army of beaters; or the beast might be found on or near his "kill" by the energetic sportsman who had taken the trouble personally to visit his baits in the very early morning.

Such bits of sport when they come are very welcome, and there is a freshness about them that is often absent from the stereotyped tiger-beat.

On this particular morning, it will be remembered, we had left the herd of spotted deer near Pipaldá, and continued our ramble to examine the buffalo-calves tied out overnight.

And so we pass on downstream, towards the spot where our first *héla* was left yesterday evening to await his fate. Round that corner, and under that banyan tree, was it not? Yes. There he is, regarding us in the distance with a bubaline stare. The poor little beast emits a little grunting squeak of welcome as he sees us approaching. The pile of fodder placed at his disposal last night has nearly disappeared, so he has not lacked occupation. One of the

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men unlooses the cords round his fetlock and drives him off in the direction of the nearest pool; while we continue on our way.

A few hundred yards further on we stop. Look at that —the fresh and deeply indented four toes and a pad of a tiger! A big one, too! He came off the bank there, and down on to the sand. His tracks are seen leading far along the river-bed in a long dotted line, and we follow them. Capricious beast, he walked now in the centre, now under the high bank, now over a soft mound of shingle, leaving great shallow depressions in it, or, on favourable soil, the clearly impressed square "pug" of the big male. Now we are approaching the second bait, and delight to see the steady tracks leading straight on in its direction. Almost as if we had been actual eye-witnesses can we picture *his* sudden halt last night, as he turned that corner and saw the poor little buff tethered there before him. So we, too, cautiously turn the corner in that winding water-course.

The *héla* is gone! The bait taken!

A couple of patient, inquisitive crows are perched not far from where he was tied. As we gaze, there is a distant "*Caw!*" and a third is seen flying low through the trees to join them. Save for this there is a grim, death-like stillness. We stare from a distance.

See! That rope that confined the little buffalo's hind leg; it hangs, broken, from the root to which he was fastened. There is the trail of a heavy body dragged along the sand and away round the corner of a little branch *nála*. This, as we know from our inspection of the surroundings yesterday evening, leads only a hundred yards or so into the grassy jungle, and terminates in a *cul-de-sac*. There is no thicker covert in all this *bandi* than that formed by the low tamarisks which fill this little branch ravine; but it is of small extent, and a few well-directed stones would search it thoroughly.

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One of the crows now leaves his perch, and flies farther up the deep-cut offshoot, curving up to and settling on a convenient bough. Then down go his head and tail, and "*Caw!*" comes his voice. No need for human speech, friend *corvus*. Well do we know what you would say!

No hunter has been here before us this year, so perhaps the slayer of our buffalo is unsophisticated enough to be lying up near his "kill."

We retire behind our sheltering corner and think it out. Shall we go back to camp, and arrange for a regular beat, with sufficient men to ensure the successful driving out of the tiger? Or are we justified in making the most of the opportunity as it presents itself? Two of our own men and three villagers accompany us—only five beaters in all. But no "stops" are required here.

At last we settle that a quiet little beat is advisable. It will not disturb the tiger if he has moved on elsewhere. My orderly has a watch. It is compared with ours; and careful plans are explained to him. At a fixed moment—allowing a generous margin of time for unforeseen contingencies—he is to extend his men on both banks of the *cul-de-sac*, up which they are to walk slowly, quietly talking, and chopping a tree at intervals.

The old fellow reflectively wags his head, to imply approval. It is not the first time he has played this game.

We leave the men and retrace our steps for some distance. Then we climb the bank, and, making a detour in the dry grass, in due time approach cautiously that tree that we marked ere setting out. Every step must be considered now, for if the tiger is where we hope he is, he will not yet have settled for a siesta, and is sure to take alarm at the least suspicious sound. Slowly, gently then, through the tinder-dry leaves.

There is no proper tree to roost in here. Even if there was, it would be inadvisable to climb into it, for the deep hollow to which that crow called our attention is not much

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more than fifty yards away, and we might rise within the range of vision of him who lies therein! Here, however, are several stout, close-set saplings, and a thorny bush. Behind these we shall be hidden and to a large extent sheltered. If the beast does break, he will pass within about forty yards of us, *going away*. It is quite a suitable spot.

Look at the wrist-watch. Five minutes to wait. See that the "cut-off" of the little rifle is open, the magazine full, and a cartridge still in the chamber. Gently lift away that dry teak leaf.

There is a brooding silence, broke by the far-away mewing of a peacock—"Pe-*haun!*—Pe-*haun!*—Pe-*haun!*"

A deep sigh does not much relieve the feeling of tension, which is becoming distressing.

Suddenly through the still woods resounds a distant *Tok!—Tok!—Tok!* Those were blows with the back of an axe on a dead tree. Faintly sound the voices of the men. There goes the axe again! And another. *Tok!—Tok!* They are getting slowly closer; but as yet there is not the ghost of a sign from the *nála*. We should not wonder if, after all, it contained nothing but the carcase of our poor *héla*.

There comes one of the crows; another behind him. They fly up and alight nearer us. "*Caw—caw! Ke-aw!*"

The rifle is at the ready; thumb on the safety-bolt ready to press it back. Still nothing appears.

The men must be quite close now. By Jove! There's a figure hastily climbing a tree!

A small bird comes fluttering out of a bush rather to our right, and attracts sudden attention. No. It is nothing. Our eyes return to the edge of the——

In some extraordinary way there is a tiger standing there, close in front of us—broadside on!

Chick! goes the safety-bolt.

It *is* a tiger! But for the life of us we cannot tell how

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big, how marked, or any other particulars. Our eyes are enchained by his splendid *tout-ensemble*, until, next moment, he is moving forward, across us, at a slow, heavy, leisurely walk.

He is passing now — past — well past — wait another moment—a little more—now——

Bang!

"Woof!"

* * * * * *

The tiger has disappeared in the grass. There is a sudden crying of peafowl all around, as the report of the shot dies away in the jungle; then that too is quieted. Still we continue standing intently there.

After a while there comes the voice of old Abbás Khán shouting from a low tree—

"He's gone on towards the big *nála*."

"Can you see him?" I call.

"No!"

"Then send a man up higher."

A dusky figure is seen climbing. Shortly comes an excited voice—"There he is! See! There he is! Lying down beyond the big *kowa* tree"—and the old orderly goes clambering up after the first climber.

"Have you got the glasses?" we yell.

"What?"

"*Glasses.*"

"They are (here)."

"Use them, then, and see if he is breathing."

We cautiously make our way towards his tree, and, arriving near it, address the old fellow, who is standing up aloft, affectionately embracing a branch, with eyes glued to the powerful prism binoculars.

"Is he dead?"

"He does not move."

"Where is he lying?"

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"In that grass, that red grass, close to the little *chirónji* tree."

"How far?"

"Perchance it is a hundred paces."

There is a point of vantage among some big rocks rather to our right front, and we are soon on them, within about sixty yards of the *chirónji* tree. But nothing is visible.

"Is he breathing?" we call back in a low tone.

"I cannot tell," comes the reply.

We creep a little nearer, still among tall rocks; there are stones handy, and soon they are flying through the air.

"He is dead!" cries the old man after a while. "A stone rolled on top of him!"

There is a handy tree, with easy boughs, a short way farther on, and soon we are in it, rifle in hand. Thirty yards off, in the grass, lies something black and white, and quite still. We climb a little higher, and stare hard. Then we climb down.

There is a bush still farther on. We peer carefully round it.

His tail is towards us. His head is turned away. And the pose of that head is the pose of death. Nevertheless, for a space, we stand watching, rifle to shoulder.

We stoop and fumble for a big stone. Then, rifle held ready in the left hand, we cast that stone over the tall grass, on to the brindled hide. *Thud!*

Next moment the jungle echoes to a cheerful cry—

"Whoo—whoop! Come along; it's all right!"

* * * * * *

It is to be doubted whether a greater head of *Cervus axis* ever occupied so comparatively confined limits as in those little *bandis* at the period described.

One evening we saw a herd leave the forest for the open

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fields surrounding it, in which were counted no less than eleven big stags, while the total number of deer was computed at one hundred and fifty, and comprised many smaller 'brockets.'

Heads of from 34 to 35 inches in length were almost common in those jungles, 37½ being the biggest pair of horns secured.

A stroll through the coppices and grassy rides of the Pípaldá jungle in its palmy old days was a wonderful experience to one most of whose *shikár* had been obtained only too literally at the wringing sweat of his brow.

The marvellous abundance of game, the rush of the twinkling legs and spotted hides through the underwood —they never went farther than a quarter of a mile ere pulling up—and the certainty that one's quarry was *not* a dreamy myth, whatever might be the difficulty of working up to and picking out the biggest stag—these, added to the beauties of that enchanting retired woodland, all combined to form an impression that time can never efface.

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UNDER THE JÁMÚNS

LET not the reader indulge in fond fancies of the delicious and succulent fruit hanging in all its lusciousness on a sun-bathed old wall in distant England, nor yet conjure up visions of the vale of far Kashmir: these plums are but the small black fruit of the Indian *jámún* (*Eugenia jambulana*); and they grow in lavish profusion, astringent, rough, and alum-like to the cultivated palate, on the larger trees that mingle with groves of mango and *mhowa* on the highest plateaux of the southern Sátpúras. The *jámún* displays its prodigal harvest just before the commencement of the monsoon rains, and at this season its shady green boughs are to be seen hanging heavy-laden with the well-known berries that are about the size and colour of English damsons. A few of the more favoured trees bear fruit that is quite passably sweet, and almost free from astringent taste; and these are resorted to by the Indian black bear and his apparently near relative the aboriginal Korku.

Both Korkus and bears have, before the fruiting of the *jámún*, been regaling themselves on the fallen jungle mangoes, and, before that again, on the rich flowering of the *mhowa* tree, not to mention the *sakhriya*—a queer, sweet-flavoured, whitish berry, which grows in myriads on a prickly bush partaking of the nature of a creeping bramble; and their palates are tickled by the distinct change in diet now afforded by *Eugenia jambulana*. From the deep glens and ravines that sink away sheer from the

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plateaux-tops of this portion of the Sátpúras, our friends the bears come climbing up night after night. They leave their shambling ways marked clear in the dust of the forest road and of jungle-paths; they snuffle and grunt merrily all night under the sweetest trees, blow themselves out enormously, and shuffle away before dawn into the almost inaccessible fastnesses that surround the open park land on top of these hills. Gradually attracted by Nature's wondrous profusion of pleasant diet, there may be many bears collected within a radius of a mile or so; but the cover is so dense, the sea of jungle, rock, cliff, bamboo, and giant creepers so difficult of search, that almost the only way of getting a shot at *Bhálú* is to wait dinner for him.

Well do I recall one night that I forced myself, an unwelcome and uninvited guest, on the *Bhálú's* supper-party. I had, while riding home the previous day, discovered a splendid tree of sweet *jámúns*. Rising in my stirrups, I had had quite a little meal, pulling down the laden branches and then filling my pockets with fruit to munch on the homeward way. I was just departing, when I noticed fresh signs of bears in the vicinity of the tree; and at that moment a little black Korku came along the forest-path.

"Bears!" said he in reply to my query, scratching a sturdy leg with the other horny toe. "Bears! What's that? Never heard of such things. Never knew of anything called a bear. From my youth up I never yet——"

But my cane was crooked round his neck, and I guided him and his uncomfortable grin below that tree. "See!" I urged, "O thou wicked brother-in-law of many bears! Behold! (indicating documentary evidence under the *jámún* tree). Who did that, eh?"

"*O Máhárájʼ!*" he grinned widely, "I see! Yes! How shall I tell lies to your presence? Nightly do they come —since the moon was small. Nightly do they suck *jámúns* and wrangle. There's my hut up there, beyond

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the clearing and the *kútki* field, and I hear and know it all!"

"Then let there be a *charpái* here half an hour before sundown," quoth I, "and bark-ropes, too, against my return; and a suitable reward shall be thine."

* * * * * *

Towards evening I was riding back to the rendezvous.

To my left ascended a mountain shoulder, out of which was carved the tortuous little road I followed: to my right there yawned a huge *khóra* of misty depth. At its bottom lay tiny patches of dark green—tall mango groves in the bed of the stream, near the one waterhole that I knew of there. The great Kámdar *khóra!* Nineteen hundred feet deep, and a mile across. From its depths came the faint whoops of *langúrs* at play, and the distant calls of grey jungle-cocks. The sun was declining to rest far beyond the stretching lower ranges of the Mélghát. The road made some agonising twists, skipped across a narrow, sharp-backed *col*, with sheer, bare, yellow-grassed *couloirs* falling precipitously to right and left, and toiled up a long spur to the top of the plateau of Bairát, where grew my *jámún* tree.

My man had preceded me, with rug and food, and the Korku, having fulfilled his promise of the morning, stood there, with a friend to help him fix the *machán*.

There were two large plum trees, about twenty yards apart, and between them grew an *aola* tree. In the latter I caused the string cot to be tied. While this operation was in progress, I and my orderly tore down large quantities of plums, and disposed them temptingly on an open space at a comfortable angle from my tree, and about five yards from the spot where I should be seated, rifle in hand. At last all was ready, and I mounted to my perch and settled everything in a thoroughly comfortable manner—rifle with night-sight at my side, water-bottle hanging

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conveniently from a bough close to my head, and haversack with light refreshment, *not* of a noisy kind, somewhere handy. The men went away.

It was right at the fag end of the hot weather; and at this elevation—close on four thousand feet—the breeze was tempered by moisture that presaged a near approach of the monsoon current. The moon was almost full, as she shone through the interstices of the jungle on her way to the zenith. Through a gap in the beautifully rounded foliage of great mango trees, growing hard by the edge of the plateau, one obtained a glimpse of the far-off Tapti valley, still bathed in a reddish mist, or dust-haze, illumined by the after-glow of sunset. Distant tinklings denoted the return home of cattle to the Korku huts some five hundred yards away. The eternal night-jars began to set up their "*Chuckoo-chuckoo-chuckoo!*" or to sail ghost-like abroad, uttering a peculiar cry that sounds like "*Chyeece.*" Then, somewhere down beyond the edge of the khud, one heard the bark of a wandering *khákar.*

Night-watching in trees is not a form of amusement that appeals to me much now, after a long course of the same—necessitated by the very thick jungles in which most of my *shikár* has been carried out—but the first hour or so of such a vigil, until one gets bored, and especially if animals appear and interest the watcher, never fails to exercise a certain mystic charm. Thick-skulled and unhappy must he be whose perceptions fail to respond to the wooing of our mother Nature in one of her most attractive moods! One is carried away, as it were, to some tremendously distant era, when we all were children of the forest, dependent on the good earth in much more direct fashion than we seem to be now; when the risings of the sun and moon, the passing of clouds, a crackle in the shadow of the trees, a stealthy step in the dark—all seem to have been more intimately bound up with man's very existence.

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This is the harking back of the soul of man to prehistoric influences.

Time in *machán*s often passes wonderfully quickly. I had looked at my watch, and was surprised to find it past nine o'clock. A jungle path ran along the edge of the little clearing in which stood my trees, and down this came a flitting shape, halted, tripped on again to a sound like light clicking of castanets. A *khákar!* But I have never satisfied myself as to whether this sound proceeds from the little creature's tongue or hoofs. Later on, two small animals—civets perhaps—played about under the far *jámún* tree. About midnight I was straining my eyes to make out a large colourless form that followed the same path down which the barking deer had come. It moved steadily, slowly, keeping to the shadows, too deliberate for anything but a tiger or panther. It disappeared gradually towards a neck of land leading to a higher portion of plateau. Shortly after this there was a distant throaty noise—the rattling rough voice common alike to big boars, bears, tigers, and panthers—and, growing quickly bigger in the full moonlight, an old bear came rushing helter-skelter past my tree. Trundling rapidly along, he entered the forest beyond, and came to a halt. Not a sound ensued for about a minute. Then he gave a few loud indignant sniffs, and moved away through the rustling dry leaves.

It must have been about 2 a.m. that, lying back with eyes half closed, I became aware of a black object approaching once more. I raised myself quietly. On it came in the bright moon's rays, its whitish snout protruding from a mass of shaggy black hair. A bear! On he waddled until ten, seven, five yards separated us; and down went his head to the very heap of plums we had specially arranged for his delectation. There he sucked and slobbered. Oh, such a smacking of lips—long, prehensile lips! Oh, so busy; blowing himself out at lightning speed,

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crunching up the *jámúns*, stones and all, sniffing, sighing, gobbling, grunting!

In my hand I held a borrowed rifle, my own trusty friend not being just at that time available. As I raised the hammer, humouring it with pressure on trigger, it gave out a soft click. *Bhálú* paused an instant. Then he slobbered again. Yes, I had him fair. Making allowance for the hair on his back, the night-sight, clear white under the moon, lay straight on his shoulder. I never felt more confident of bagging my beast; and I took special pains this time, for the tribe of *Bhálú* had not long since put me in their debt—I owed a fatal grudge. Very slowly and steadily I pressed that trigger. *Bang!* . . .

A lot of nasty white smoke hung in the way, as I lowered the weapon to gloat over my prey. There was a shuffling noise. *The bear was not there!* A black shadow shot away into the trees with a "*gurr—whirr—gurr*": there came the sound of stampeding in the leaves; then a "*Whoof!*" as he struck against something hard in his hurry. The bear was gone; and as he went more bears rushed away in various directions from the far *jámún* trees. A couple of humping backs went bumping away in the moonlight. All had gone! And they never returned.

Next morning revealed a gory tuft of long hair near the half-eaten plums, with a fraction of skin attached. Farther up the path led the tracks of a tigress, and they met—or nearly met—those of a bear. Here, then, was the explanation of the hurry of the first visitor to me under the plum trees.

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CHÓNḌO: A SÁMBAR PARADISE

AT certain lucky intervals, few and far between in these degenerate times, it is sometimes the lot of the prowling *shikári* to happen on a secluded corner, some overlooked nook, whither game, finding sanctuary, have retreated and live in peace, their numbers steadily increasing until they recall the memories of those good old times long ago, before the present era of cheap guns and rapidly contracting hunting-grounds.

Not long ago it was the writer's fortune to find himself by chance in such a favoured spot.

Setting out over the hills accompanied by one of my own men and a couple of the aborigines carrying the day's provender, I had set myself the task of exploring a certain very remote hilltop rejoicing, together with its surrounding forests, in the name of Chóndo.

Long before, prior to the afforestation of these tracts and the herding of the jungle men into certain fixed village sites, Chóndo had supported its little aboriginal hamlet—a rude collection of temporary huts hard by the little clearing of nomad or *dya* cultivation that used to return such rich crops of the hill grains known as *kútki*, *kódu*, etc. The water-supply was afforded by a tiny spring or *jhira* as is so often seen in these mountains, where a rude sort of well, crossed and recrossed by timbers driven into its sides, gave the climber access to the scanty supply of the precious fluid, the fluid itself being scooped up laboriously

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in a half cocoanut shell, as it oozed capriciously from the surrounding rock.

The sun had not long been above the horizon when we, who had started from the valley below by the light of a waning moon, stood close to the highest point of Chóndo.

Smothering the ground that had once been cultivated was a dense mass of small leafless coppice, undergrown and almost choked itself by that horrible jungle plant the *bandhar*, whose rough, raspberry-plant-like growth is so unpleasant to push one's way through.

On every side the mountain sank away, clothed with harsh yellow grass, to the edges of the basalt cliffs encircling the hills around: below these short cliffs came a succession of slopes clothed with yet green and thick jungle and leading down into high-lying little valleys, the streams draining these valleys at length, dropping in their turn over the lower strata of basaltic precipices and seeking the level of the main valley system of these mountains.

When one stands amid such solitudes and the mind grasps the enormous extent of ground and covert stretching for miles around, the great difficulties attending successful hunting in these hills become fully impressed on the visitor.

There is such a vast selection of hiding-places, even for such large and conspicuous animals as bison and sámbar. In every direction lies a panorama of gorge on gorge, mountain on mountain, cliff piled on cliff, the whole smothered in an almost all-pervading forest of jungly growth. Almost within the reach of a good shout lies another series of knoll-covered mountain-tops, but between us and it, all unseen, gapes a cavernous gulch some fifteen hundred feet in depth.

It is during the late rains and early part of the cold weather that the sámbar repair to the higher plateaux and tops, such as that of Chóndo, and the now dried soil is

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seen to be impressed with thousands of hoof-tracks of the big deer. On the more favourite spots almost every handy tree-trunk stands red and frayed where the stags, their horns itching to be clear of the drying "velvet," have played sore havoc with the soft bark. In all directions well-worn paths or "sámbar ladders" lead plunging through the copsewood down to the lower grounds. A particularly irritating fly known as the *Dháns* is responsible for this migration that has filled the high ground with all these traces; for it renders the lower-lying forests almost unbearable to every living creature during the moonsoon season.

With the exodus of this fly, however, which is synchronous with the drying up of the jungle, the deer descend once more to the level of the big lower valleys, and haunt the more densely forested terraces that rise from them. Knowing this, it was not long ere our survey of the top of Chóndo was completed, and we were on our way off the hill. From its northern side three long steep spurs, jutting out like great headlands, descend to the valley of the Upper Sípna, and we chose the centre one of these as our route. Pushing through a dense mass of *bandhár* and *tiwas* coppice, a long and almost precipitous grass slope led us to the spur below, and we entered the higher portion of the teak forests. To either side fell deep ravines from which rose the sound of bird-life, and the whoops of *langúr* monkeys as they made their way over the treetops. Otherwise a deserted appearance pervaded these higher gullies. The grass became longer: the carpeting of dried and fallen teak leaves deeper and noisier under foot. Thus we descended for about a thousand feet.

The trees now thinned out and we found ourselves approaching a steeper fall. Close to the left rose a shady *gúlar* tree on the slope of yellow grass, and on approaching it a sudden rush of heavy animals brought the rifle swiftly to the "ready" as we ran hastily to the edge. Away to the right a ponderous galloping was to be heard, as some

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beast hurriedly crashed into the sheltering jungle. Far down the slopes in front a large dark object had just halted. It had its head turned back over its shoulder and gazed up at us, its huge broad ears held intently still. A sámbar hind! Then "*Whee-onk! Dhánk!*" rings from the grass closer to us, and a young stag, his budding horns just beginning to sprout, sticks his yellow-lined tail up into the air and rushes downhill with those wonderful long, sure-footed bounds so peculiar to his kind. Quite a family-party it was, then, that we had disturbed under the *gúlar* tree's shade; and one of the highest-lying on the hills no doubt.

Far below us the valley of the Sípna was to be seen, pent in between its encircling basalt bluffs. Along the foot of these silent, guardian-like precipices lay a succession of strips of heavy green jungle. In the centre of the broad glen the whitened and boulder-strewn dry bed of the river peeped out here and there. It was there that I had arranged to meet a dozen of the hill men, who, intent on securing the sámbar venison that they coveted, had given me information of this secluded spot—where, said they, the deer were congregated like sheep in a fold. "Pay us nothing, *sahib!*" they had insisted, patting their stomachs by way of illustration, "but shoot us a sámbar, and we will work for you all day!"

So it was here that a halt was called, and under the deep shade cast by a heavy clump of bamboos the tiffin basket displayed its cheering contents. Down by a neighbouring pool my orderly was dispensing a light repast among the appreciative beaters: to each a handful of parched gram, and a piece of raw brown sugar or *gùr*—a little attention to their inner men that goes far in ensuring a successful beat.

As for the sportsman, his sense of contentment was complete. To recline in the shade, one's hunger appeased, and, with a good cheroot as a digestive, to gaze through

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lowered lids at the grandeur of the wild surroundings, down the forest-arched vista of the shingly river, or away to the distant amphitheatre of lonely hills, and to lend one's self a willing captive to the thrall of mother Nature —that was surely a luxury unknown to unhappy mortals 'mid the "madding crowd"! No kind of trouble could find one here. Those petty trivialities, such powerful factors in the outer and bustling world, would fall from one's mind at one glimpse of those glorious solitudes. The man vainly seeking repose from carking care would surely find it here. The great solemn woods impress one with the feeling that one's petty human frettings are all too small. They imbue one with a leaning towards fatalism.

All very "improving" thoughts no doubt—but the cheroot has come to an end, and my Korku friends are hinting at making a move. This lotus-eating must come to an end, and man, driven—impelled—by one or another of his irresistible impulses, must be up and doing.

Not knowing the ground himself, the sportsman must needs place himself and his fortunes in the hands of what local talent he may find; so to-day I found myself trudging along behind a little black Korku, who, axe on shoulder, brushed his way through the yellow grass towards the base of the cliff-encircled bluffs lying back from the river. And soon enough it became evident that the little man knew what he was about. Our narrow path shortly gave way to some open glades in the denser teak jungle, where the feathery foliage of a lot of *aola* trees (*Emblica officinalis*) shaded the ground, laden with heavy crops of their acid berries; and the surrounding grass was seen to be trampled almost away by the sámbar which visited them during their nocturnal wanderings.

In many places the trampled and dusty earth gave witness of this spot being the chosen arena of the truculent stags, and all the saplings round about had been frayed to pieces by their horns. A short distance away a

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deep-cut tributary ravine gave approach to a long terraced hillside that was smothered in shady woods. The whole aspect of the place indeed would have indicated to even a half-trained eye the fact that it was an ideal haunt of *Cervus unicolor;* and one felt instinctively that those bosky dells held something good. The height to which a neighbouring tree-trunk was scored with deep horn-gashes showed incidentally that a stag of uncommon size had his home somewhere near.

My own man I had left with the beaters to keep them up to their work, so the small aborigine and I began climbing towards the post that would command the best position whence to mark a startled beast. Up a long spur we toiled, under the now scorching rays of a February sun, crackling in an unavoidable way the deep carpeting of fallen teak leaves. At the *débouchure* of a transverse ravine the jungle man was posted in a tree; myself climbing higher up, and finally settling on a point that gave the best view up and down hill. Here I seated myself, in shade, marking my position by a whistle that was answered by my scout in the tree down below.

The surrounding slopes were very thickly covered with jungle. Only here and there a glimpse might be caught of the ground through the maze of mingled stems and bamboos. One's whole attention in such places has to be centred on the locating of an animal's line of advance by the sounds of his feet in the tell-tale leaves—after which one must endeavour to cut that line, and await his coming—and one's luck—at the nod of fortune. It is seldom indeed—especially in the case of but a single rifle to watch the large extent of such approaches—that a deer is ever driven up to the watcher's post.

After the usual lengthy wait, the distant sounds of the rousers of the game came wafting along the hillsides. The "beat" had begun. It came along slowly.

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After a long time there arose that excited yelling that tells of animals afoot; followed by other signs that whatever they were they had broken back. Then silence, then again, after a still longer period, on came the beaters once more.

A full hour had I sat there when a tremendous though still distant howling broke on my ears; and a faint crashing in the leaves some hundreds of yards to my front was heard. On it came, growing louder and louder. It seemed to be making for a point half-way between the treed scout and my post. I seized the rifle, rose, and ran to place myself on the line; and as I reached the spot which I had determined, was nearly knocked over by a big hind sámbar that came racing through the bamboos right on top of me! *"Conk! Dhánk! Bhaunk!"* burst out a perfect hurricane of barks and bellings as the biggest lot of sámbar I have ever seen together dashed past, all round me, out of which I vainly endeavoured to pick the stag. Next moment the jungle had closed behind them, there was a furious heavy galloping, and they had gone. Perplexed and chagrined, I was preparing to follow them on the chance of pushing them out on some open space or spur, when there came the crackling of leaves in the bamboo clump below. Again I ran forward and halted. A huge dark shape was coming swiftly through the shady forest; it halted, then it came on, then it halted again. A glint of filtered sunlight fell on such a huge tree-like horn that my heart seemed all at once to cease beating. I had found him, then—the stag, the record head, for which I had been looking all those weary years! Here he came at last! First a poked-out muzzle, then—*such* a head! Then the cautious, hesitating, wary, leary old fellow himself!

Instantly the ivory bead rested on his shoulder—the ·400 bore cordite rifle held in the grip of anxiety, almost of despair. A stunning, sharp report! Up rears the huge

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brute convulsively; up, and up; then *smash* comes his enormous bulk on the hillside.

* * * * * *

He was the biggest sámbar I ever bagged. Forty-five and a half inches; very massive; and an immense spread of horn. Many a long day have I done in the jungle, and many more I hope to do—but when shall I see his like again?

Four stags and a lot of hinds had broken back in that single beat, besides the big herd that came past me. And the Korkus swore that almost any of the other many favourite grounds in the valley would yield full as many deer when beaten properly. Since that day I have not revisited Chóndo. But it is there still, as good as ever; and I am keeping it up my sleeve as a shoot to be indulged in at rare intervals. And, as a great treat, I may take a friend there—under an oath—a terrible oath—of inviolable secrecy; for Chóndo is a paradise, and a paradise it must remain.

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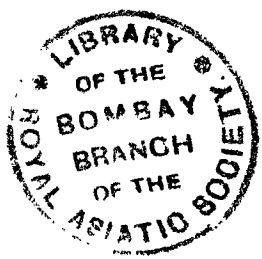

REMINISCENCES OF JUNGLYPUR

HOW they come crowding in on us at times—the memories of days gone by! And what more favourable moment than when one lies back on the big stuffed chair in front of a glowing fire of coals, pipe in mouth, one's feet comfortably on the inglenook?

The thick curtains are drawn, shutting out the bitter prospect of driving sleet and slushy pavement, where night comes down on the fog-blurred lamps, and at one's elbow the cut-glass bottle and seltzer sparkle benignly.

The thoughts are far afield. Farther than the autumn just past, with its recollections of moor and loch, spinney and fast-rusting bracken; far beyond these chill seas, "somewhere east of Suez"—in fact, away in that "coral-stranded" land of strange interest and warring contrasts, that repels with one hand and beckons with the other! There rises before the mind's eye a vision of the little camp under the spreading branches of some giant mango or banyan tree. The golden sunset glow dying in the west, over mighty forest-clad hills, as we fling ourselves into the comfortable chair and light up a good Indian cheroot —not a guinea a hundred here! The hum of voices behind the little 80-lb. tent, where the skins are pegged out, and the rattle of a cleaning-rod hard at work on the good rifle that has contributed to such an excellent day's sport. In the ravine, hard by, as the shadows deepen, the hoarse bark of a wandering deer.

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Not long ago I happened to be quartered at one of those little old-world stations yet to be found in India, which would have been quite the dullest spot in the whole of this vast peninsula to which a poor exile could be condemned, had it not been for the sport obtainable in its neighbourhood.

To the southward stretched a great flat and fertile plain, the home of countless antelope, and here and there affording some pig-sticking; while to the north there rose, sweeping from east to west as far as the eye could range, the wall-like ramparts of a mountain system in and beyond which, in the old days, lay a famous big game country. The fastnesses of this region were not outside the limits of a day's ride, while many of its wildest glens could be reached within three or four hours.

Famine, native guns, and the proximity of the cantonment are, each to a certain extent, responsible for a considerable diminution in the numbers of the *fauna* of those hills, which, like the heavy forests that once protected them, have receded to the more inaccessible nooks of hidden glens.

The traveller, passing up the old route taken by Wellesley's force on its victorious dash from Argaon on Gawalgarh, will now disturb no wild-eyed bison. The mountain bull, through whose very bamboo-grown retreats a British army then forced its arduous passage, has long since withdrawn himself and the steadily contracting numbers of his kind deeper and deeper into the forest depths. Other game animals have followed his example. But there is still a little *shikár* to be had. At intervals—which are becoming fewer and farther between—red-letter days dawn, reminiscences of what one might have expected long ago in those days when *khubber* was not scarce, and the Briton quaffed his "brandy *pawnee*" in the grateful shade of the golden-blossomed "pagoda tree." So, in the hope that an account of some of the good days

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we enjoyed there may be of interest, I will refer to my *shikár* diary and refresh the memory.

In these depreciated times it is worthy of note that a large amount of our sport was enjoyed within a distance of from five to ten miles of the little cantonment.

There are few localities in any country which, within five miles of one's house, surrounded by all the comforts of civilisation, can boast an extensive deer forest, containing, in addition, panthers, bears and smaller game, and, deeper in, tigers.

It is the hills that most attract the sportsman in these parts, perhaps, indeed, all the world over. Sport seems to most of us at its best when followed among their heights. It certainly assumes a more poetic, romantic interest under such circumstances, although the plain possesses many a charm of its own.

Hill *shikár* entails many arduous difficulties to overcome, in addition to the circumvention of the game itself, besides which, in the relaxing climate of the tropics, it includes enjoyment of a more bracing atmosphere and great change of scene to men whose daily avocations are, for the greater part, carried out 'mid the comparatively uninteresting confines of the level low country.

Here, in this *Ultima Thule*, the proximity of the hills is the making of the place. How greatly they would be missed may easily be realised when the low-trailing monsoon cloud-banks hide them from view and bring the drear and featureless expanse of the surrounding plains into unpleasant prominence.

Most of our sport here is had by making short expeditions into the hills, mostly of a day, or even of a few hours, snatched often between working hours. The method employed is to obtain the services of some of the Korku hill-men as scouts. These are supposed to wander about within a ten to fifteen mile radius of cantonments, collecting and sending in news of any sport worth a visit

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from their employer. The Korku is by no means a born hunter or tracker. In addition, he has become exceedingly lazy, since, paradoxically enough, famine has brought him plenty! But he is the only man to be had locally, and now and then does a useful piece of work—when the spirit moves him. All the hill-folk within reach of Junglypur know that their reward is certain if they happen to mark a beast home, and will only sit and watch it while one of their number fetches the *sahib*. Even this knowledge, and the fact that some neighbour has just made an easy fortune in such a manner, will not, however, of a necessity tempt them to do likewise when the chance offers. Laziness, pure and unalloyed, is the only reason one can adduce to account for such apathy. Yet they will labour hard enough to collect and carry, for a similar distance, to the cantonment bazaar, a bundle of firewood weighing half a hundredweight and worth a few annas.

These Korkus are a branch of the aboriginal tribes of prehistoric India, and are of Kolarian stock, although by this time they have a large admixture of more or less Aryan blood among them. Where they have not had much contact with the dwellers of the plains, they show broad, squat, black features, smooth, hairless, thick-lipped faces, and, as a rule, stunted, though hardy and wiry, little frames. When they have not too free intercourse with the superior (?) native of purer Aryan descent, they are extremely honest and truthful, and are at all times characterised by much good nature and a considerable sense of humour.

The Kórkúni appears to possess a better physique than her lord and master; and in many instances, especially where an Aryan cross may be suspected, is not exactly ill-favoured, with smooth, finely turned, well-developed limbs, and often a surprisingly fair colour. They have also the free, easy carriage of hill-folk.

To see a party of Korku women swinging down some

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winding mountain-path in single file, armlets and anklets jingling barbarically, chattering, joking, laughing and singing, with a bunch of clematis or the flowers of the *champa* stuck artistically behind an ear or garlanding a supple leg or arm, is a refreshing sight after the cowed and unhealthy prudery of their Hindu sisters of the plains.

It is evident that, in common with most hill tribes, the Korkus have a considerable amount of artistic perception; and a dance, performed in their rude wattle-and-daub villages at the time of that Hindu festival the *Holi*, when they go through regular "figures" to the rhythmical accompaniment of strange melody and waving peacock-tail switches, astonishes one by the unexpected grace that pervades its every movement.

I cannot say much for the Korku as a *shikári*, however, although he is sometimes fairly good on his own ground, that is to say, in the jungles in the vicinity of his home. There was one particular place—the Barhánpur valley—which nearly always held game. Only a five-mile drive from one's bungalow, along an excellent road, it ran up into the hills to the right for about three miles, hemmed in by *salai* and teak-scrub covered hillsides of considerable steepness, the loftiest of which ran up to about 3,400 feet above the sea and, say, 2,200 above the level of the plain. Several precipitous *khóras*, or ravines, joined it from both sides, and in the centre ran a fair-sized stream in the rainy weather, certain pools of which always lasted out the hot season. In spite of the continual presence of grass-cutters from cantonments, the natural attractions of this pretty little valley were irresistible to the bears, sámbar, nilgae, occasional panthers, and smaller deer, which had their homes in its sheltered nooks. Much of the soil was saline, and it was conveniently close to the crops on the plains below.

In the same way that a favourite eddy behind a rock will be found tenanted by a good fish, no matter how often its

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former finny resident may have been removed, this Barhánpur valley, if not overshot, seldom failed to attract fresh denizens to take the place of those we killed.

I remember one bitterly chill misty morning, in the early part of the cold weather, rising at 5 a.m., lighting the lamp, and, getting on my bike, a twenty minutes' exhilarating spin along the capital road brought me to the lower foot-hills, and shortly later to the "village"—about half-a-dozen wattle-and-daub huts—of Barhánpur, where my orderly met me with a few Korkus; the rest had already proceeded up the valley to scout.

A sharp walk for about a mile up the dank and chilly bed of the yet misty valley, which was already waking to the shrill cries of the grey jungle-cocks and the mewing of peafowl, landed us at the mouth of one of the side glens —the Am *khóra*—near which a good stag sámbar had been seen the previous day. On a little peak, silhouetted against the flush of coming dawn, I made out the forms of two of the scouts. They had seen nothing, however, and we held on up the glen in silence, spreading out through the long, dewy spear-grass that clothed the level ground bordering the stony watercourse. From a thicket there suddenly rose the beating of heavy wings, and a loud "*Kok-kok-kok-kok!*" as a peacock, scattering the dew in glittering drops, burst forth clamorously, and, rising clear of the trees, sailed ponderously away down the *khóra*, his grand tail streaming behind him, brilliant in the beams of the newly risen sun.

Here and there up the valley rang the loud "*Kuck-kaa-kiya-kuck'm!*" of a jungle-cock, and as we reached the spot where he had been shouting his soul out, the wary bird might be seen running swiftly off through the leafless underwood. Further on we surprised a couple of barking deer. Leaping over the dripping grass, heads low, and round, fat, white-scutted rumps high in air at each bound, they popped into the *nála*, and, hopping up the far bank,

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stood suddenly, artful little dodgers, just behind some tree trunk or bush; then, with a short hoarse bark, off uphill again.

The clear fresh morning air resounded with the notes of birds and the screaming of the little rosy-headed parrakeets that swept along the hillsides to settle in a cloud on some favourite tree. By this time we had reached the little pass, or *khind*, by which the stag of which we were in search usually mounted to his day retreat; and I had already begun to fear that he must have taken another path this morning, or be already couched, and to curse inwardly the annoyingly nocturnal habits of this fine species of the deer tribe, that made it so difficult to find him after the sun was up, when, simultaneously with some of the men, my eye caught sight of two dark objects on the shadowy side of a little spur, and the glasses showed me two sámbar creeping slowly along and up one of those narrow game-paths so common in these hills. As the rearmost animal passed across an open space, I noted with accelerated pulse that it was the stag, and that the reports of the Korkus as regards the size of his antlers had been in no wise exaggerated. The extremely white and polished tips of his tines proclaimed that he could not have dropped his antlers last season, and, although nothing is more deceptive at a distance than the apparent size of the horns of the rusine type of the *Cervidæ*, I put him down mentally as carrying a 38-inch head at least, for it is only fully grown stags, which have attained to their prime, that cast their horns irregularly.

I thoroughly appreciated the good fortune which had, at the very outset of the day, thrown him in my way. For every good stag seen in those regions a surprising amount of hard work and frequent blank days have to be undergone.

I was using a ·303 Lee-Metford carbine, which had not long been in my possession; and I had not yet learnt that

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with this and similar weapons it is usually far the better plan to take a long and steady shot in the sitting or prone position than to endeavour to work close up to one's game, and then probably get a snapshot at an animal bolting away or past one in a maze of tree-trunks and jungle. So instead of stalking up the spur, which, at a distance of about 200 yards, faced that up which the deer were climbing, I made the mistake of trying to work up the ravine separating them, in order to cut them off or get close in on them. Of course I left the men behind.

It was stiff work, and although I caught a glimpse of my game once about eighty yards off, I could not tell which was the stag until they had again moved off and out of sight among the trees.

By this time they were evidently uneasy, and were steadily—albeit easily—climbing, instead of loitering on their way. Shortly afterwards, reaching the top of the ridge above us, they disappeared over its brow. "Now!" thought I, and a heart-breaking clambering run up an extremely slippery declivity took me to where they had vanished. But when I cautiously raised myself and peeped over the ground in front there was no sign of them. After crossing to the edge of the further slope, and satisfying myself that the deer had really moved off, I sat down and examined the hillsides beyond, and shortly came to the conclusion that there was one line, and one only, which a sámbar would have taken.

Going back a short way and signalling up the men, who were now about 500 feet below in the Am *khóra*, I thought out a plan of campaign; and in due time moved quietly along the ascending ridge for about a quarter of a mile. I then approached the edge once more, and found myself occupying a capital position for a steady shot at anything breaking out of the very likely-looking covert which filled a precipitous *kagár*—a deep-cut furrow—seaming the hill-side half-way between me and the men, who I could now

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see were extending down its slopes. From the elevation at which I now sat—about 3,000 feet and, perhaps 1,800 above the plain—a charming panorama lay unfolded at my feet. Ridge on ridge of queer, knife-edged saddle-backs of the curious trap formation, a warm yellow in the light, with deep purple shadows; from my feet the mountain-side trended steeply down, clad with teak poles, *salai* thickets, and clumps of small bamboo, to the valley, a sister glen to the Am *khóra*,—which now lay at my back,—rising again to the level Bánur plateaux, yellow with long spear-grass; while beyond the sharply defined chasms and ridges of the hills across the Barhánpur valley the cone-shaped peak of the Chór Pahár cut the clear blue cold-weather sky—a bold wedge.

Away to my right lay the level blue horizon of the plains, the minute white walls of the magazine and other buildings of Junglypur shining remotely distant in the morning sun, marking the spot where the little cantonment lay nestling in its embowering groves of trees.

From the higher *ballas*, or flat hilltops around, came the sharp, strident calls of the hill-loving painted partridge.

As I admired these beautiful surroundings, and drank in the light and invigorating hill air, those white dots, the beaters, were gradually working along towards me. At length they reached and entered the *kagár*, in which I felt that the stag and his hind must have halted. Their distant shouts mingled with the crashing of boulders which rolled from above went thundering and bounding downhill. Suddenly the dark form of the hind issued from a thick coppice. She trotted along the hillside, and halted, her big ears moving to and fro in suspense; then she began to clamber at a lumbering canter straight towards me. On she came, and in about a minute there rang out a sharp trumpet note of alarm, and a shower of stones rattled downhill, as she changed her direction on sighting or

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winding me, and dashed into the glen below. Then, at last, a crackling of leaves uphill, and the huge yellow rump of the stag, beyond which rose a grand pair of horns, disappearing behind a mass of bamboo thicket.

Rushing uphill I was just in time to see him cantering along beyond me on the narrowest of little paths that skirted a steep face of black, basaltic rock.

The first shot missed; but the second bullet was no sooner despatched than he executed a series of extraordinary leaps, head laid back, and fore feet literally pawing the air, as he rushed over the brow of a tremendous *khad* and disappeared.

With a heavier rifle I doubt whether I should have got along as I did; but with the little Lee-Metford in my hand, I was able to reach this spot soon enough to see my stag laboriously crossing a spur about 200 yards below me, and as I sat down for a steady shot he halted, nose to the ground.

A second later the sight rested once more on that broad dark back; a careful shot was despatched, and the stag, reeling and straining an instant to face the hill, fell on his side and rolled heavily against a tree—dead.

When I reached him I found that the first hit had cut his throat close behind the angle of the jaw, thus accounting for his strange "gambades," while the second had entered his back about the middle, and close to the spine, both being Eley's soft-nosed solid bullets propelled by cordite. His antlers, which were massive and unusually deeply corrugated, gave measurements right and left of 38½ and 39 inches, 9 inches just above the burr, and 7½ round the beam.

I now left some of the men—who were industriously removing from their scanty loin-cloths the vicious black seeds of that annoying vegetable the *kussal*, or spear-grass—to skin the stag and bring in his head; and, the day being yet young, at the advice of a Korku scout, who had seen a bear, descended to cross the main valley.

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There was a sharp walk of about a mile and a half before me, and I took one of the little paths made by grass-cutters' ponies, winding down a glen to the main stream, and finally reached a spot known as the Jámún Jhira, or "Plumtree Spring," a pretty little sylvan nook, where a shallow pool lay along the flat rocks, whitening them with saline incrustations, and a thread of water trickled tinkling into a jumble of smooth pot-holes below a little waterfall. Hard by, a tiny spring oozed out from under the roots of an ancient tree. Beyond the grey rocks rose the yellow spear-grass, clothing rugged hills that were studded with jungle trees displaying vivid autumnal tints; while far up the narrow glen there hung the distant bulk of the massive heights of Jhákra. Marks of the nightly visits of deer were fairly plentiful in the soft soil and mud bordering the stream, as well as the bath-like mud-wallow of a big stag, called *lotán* by the jungle-men.

Here I investigated the mysteries of the tiffin-basket while the men squatted about the rocks for a smoke.

On my tendering a cheroot to the Korkus, great was the interest evinced by these simple fellows. Hearing a volley of laughter and chaff, I glanced up to see that the wag of the party had improved on the native method of sticking the lighted cigar through the fingers and sucking from the hands formed into a bowl; he had quietly appropriated the smoke, as it went the round from hand to hand, and sat demurely puffing it after the manner of the *sahibs*—to the intense amusement of his fellows.

After a short rest at the Jámún Jhira we took the hill again, and as the bear had been lost sight of, beat a large cup-shaped ravine, called the "Kachanár *khóra*." This took a long time, but did not produce the bear or anything else; so, accompanied by the *patél* of Barhánpur, I climbed out of this "devil's punch-bowl" by a distinctly ticklish ascent, and visited a cave, which necessitated several extremely nasty crawls along the dangerously tilted hillside that

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swept smoothly down, to end abruptly in a sudden cliff of black basalt.

The beaters went back out of the mouth of the ravine, led by the orderly; while I shortly afterwards arrived at the crest of a knife-like serrated spur, and scanned the slopes and gullies spread out beyond.

The *patél* rolled down a boulder or two, but without result, after which I thought I saw the bright rufous coat of a barking deer on an opposite ridge, and took a long shot at it. It turned out to be a bit of ant-hill, and no deer; but at the sound of the shot a black shaggy mass emerged from a thin bamboo clump below me, two hundred yards off, and, hurrying along the steep hillside, halted. A ·303 bullet struck close under him, and sent him off with a startled gasp, downhill of course, in that headlong fashion a frightened bear affects, while another close shave increased his hurry.

I ran along and down my ridge in time to see him reach the level, and, turning sharp to the left, made all haste for the next ravine, his woolly back humping along in comical haste. By this time my haste was also comical; but I reached the level in about even time, leaving the *patél* well in the rear. It was a most trying half-mile race, for there were several deep-cut ravines to scramble across, and latterly another climb to be faced; but, though reduced to a dog-trot on the flat of my feet, I got along, and sat down rather suddenly on reaching the edge of the *khóra* into which old *Bhálú* had disappeared. I then saw, from the configuration of the ground, that the bear would proceed up this narrow glen before slowing down; so rose and wearily trotted upwards to a yet higher point of vantage. As I sat down again, there he was—about as nicely 'cooked' as myself—limping along the opposite slopes.

His actual progress past or away from me was slow, because of the numerous gullies and little spurs he had to dive into or skirt round, so I had ample time. Raising

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the two hundred yards leaf I let drive. Miss! Try again.

This time a ·303 bullet hissed through his long coat and starred in white powder from the rock behind, at which he "whoofed" with annoyance, and accelerated his ungainly pace. As he came trundling along over a little open space another bullet twanged viciously off the ground just under him. With a roar of rage he started to his hind legs and made a furious demonstration in the direction of his tormentor. Although I was at least 250 yards away, across a deep chasm, it was wonderful to see how correctly he judged my direction. I now stood up and, letting go another despairing shot as he was rapidly getting away, saw him, to my delight, throw up his legs, roll over and over, and shoot swiftly out of sight into the ravine below.

The tension being relieved, I cast myself down, panting from my recent exertions; then, regaining my breath, descended to the watercourse. As I clambered down, by the aid of tree-trunks and creepers, I could have sworn that I heard somebody "yödel" upstream; so imagining that another sportsman had come out to Barhánpur that day, I cheerily replied, to the best of my ability, "Tra-la la-hi-tu!" and hastened over the rocks. What was my surprise to hear it a second time, and catch sight of the melancholy upturned visage of my victim as that mournful ululation welled from his throat and echoed down the glen! Then his head dropped, and he curled himself up for the last time.

I have heard other bears chanting their own requiem, but never another that warbled it so weirdly as this.

One of the tiny bullets alone had struck him, fairly amidships, and was found nicely mushroomed against the skin on the far side—a solid, soft-nosed Eley's. His feet were badly torn and bleeding, owing to that rough and hurried journey from the spot where I had first disturbed him.

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The men now came up; the water-bottle arrived, and was very welcome. The bear's legs were tied together with fibrous strips of the bark of the *dhámin* tree, a sapling was felled and run through his legs, and, hey presto! *Bhálu*, borne by half a dozen staggering Korkús, emerges from the Machhar *khóra* for the positively last time—feet first!

Elated by such a capital morning's sport, I turned westward and beat along the banks of the little river, missing a four-horned antelope that, with its mate, went darting and dodging away through the maze of *salai* stems. Farther on we beat a thickly wooded terrace running along the side of the now deep-sunk watercourse, and, being luckily posted, a lot of peafowl thrashed heavily up in all directions within easy range and gave a pretty right and left to the gun, the cock closing his wings with a snap and collapsing limply in mid-air like a gigantic pheasant.

This wound up the morning's doings, and I was shortly rid of my shooting boots and coasting homeward on the bike down the long, gentle slope that trends away from the base of the hills. Another hour or so found me engaged at the billiard-table in our little mess, having killed the bear over again at tiffin.

Another day, it was after a long blank morning of hard tramping, when we were returning home, that a man came running after us to say a bear had been marked down. Foot-soreness suddenly vanished, and we quickly reeled off another *kós* to the place where a small dot in the upper branches of a teak tree showed us the watcher patiently marking old *Bhálu* down.

"Somewhere in that little scar half-way up the opposite hillside" was all the information he could give us. The bear had been seen by these fellows, who had been cutting grass on the hillside, as he went meandering and snuffing his way home from a night's visit to the *bér* trees at the foot of the hill country.

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I was afraid that we should be detected if I attempted to surround the little ravine into which he had been marked, and once disturbed, the thick jungle was all in favour of the beast getting clear away; so, placing men in trees to watch the face of the hill and signal any premature move on *Bhálú's* part, I moved off alone and stalked the *nála* long and carefully up-wind. On arriving there I found that by going very cautiously along the bank and peeping over at intervals it was possible to examine the ravine fairly well; but it appeared to be deserted. Just then a little puff of wind struck my back, and, passing on, appeared to rustle the fallen leaves among the boulders in the dry bed of the watercourse. The slight rustling continued. Then, very slowly, one of those big black boulders in the shade of the bank stirred in its bed of dry leaves, and became a bear that moved a step forward and wagged its dirty-white snout from side to side with a puzzled expression.

Crack! went the ·303 from behind the trunk of a sheltering tree, and a tuft of black hair flew from his back! *Crack!* again, as he sprawled about the *nála* and passed behind a bush. Next moment a black hair trunk, with a whitish sort of label on the front of it, appeared, violently struggling up the bank towards me, still in silence. A third time the little rifle spat; and now the hair trunk rolled back amid an awful outcry, "*Whoo! whoo! whoo!*" But the well-known sound is well-nigh indescribable. An attempt at it might be, say, a blend of passionately gurgled yödel and the soulful notes of a dog with an ear for music. A few more ululations of the kind that are, unfortunately, too funny to reach one's heart, and *Bhálú* lay still in the *nála* below. Once more had he become a black boulder in its bed of leaves!

The men now arrived, and he who had done the scouting was pouring a stream of voluble abuse over the shaggy hide. I pricked up my ears.

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"What's that you say," I inquired, "abductor of *women?*"

"Oh yes, *sahib*. The old blackguard! Doesn't he just! Didn't a bear carry off a woman of our village and shut her up in a cave all the rainy season?"

"When?"

"Oh, years ago, when I was a *bachcha!*"

"You seem to know a lot about it," said I. "But perhaps the lady was a relative of yours, eh?"

"*Nay, sahib, ham kaisa*——" But his abashed protestations were drowned in the ill-suppressed cachinnations of the other Korkus and an explosive and spirituous choking from Lallu, a vagabond old bacchanalian, who acted as my *shikári* at that time.

Bána, or "The Bear," became that luckless fellow's nickname thenceforth. It is curious how widespread is this native notion regarding these ursine amourettes.

One of the funny bits of this morning's work was the look of startled surprise on the face of another sportsman, who had received news of the same bear, but from another source, and had ridden cheerfully six miles out, when he suddenly met *Bhálú* coming home in a cart!

To descend to sport of a somewhat tamer kind than that which has been already described, there were plenty of antelope within easy reach of Junglypur.

By taking a tiffin-basket and spending the morning and afternoon out in the plains, with a midday halt under some shady grove of trees, a complete and healthy change was to be had from the dull routine of station life; while a light tent and a slightly more elaborate arrangement of the commissariat and transport enabled one to extend one's range so as to include our one and only snipe and duck ground, which lay some twenty-four miles to the eastward, and in the vicinity of which the buck were numerous and carried somewhat better heads than was the rule nearer civilisation. In those parts a black buck bearing horns

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over 20 inches in length was considered good, while 22 to 23 inches would be a prize.

Now we are well aware that antelope-shooting is very apt to pall, and is looked down on by some great hunters as a pastime only fit for the babes and sucklings in the *shikári* line. However, in default of nobler game, and if indulged in with a due regard to its peculiarities, without a burning desire to make a large bag in as short a time as possible, this pursuit is capable of affording a great deal of sport and much quiet enjoyment.

Antelope-shooting, to give the most pleasing results, should be conducted with a complete disregard for the size of the bag and with an absence of all hurry.

In the country of which I speak there was nothing whatever to prevent a steady shot bagging his dozen buck in a day—that is, of course, if the sport were to be judged of by quantity, and not merely by quality. Except where the herds of antelope had been unduly harassed by native *shikáris*, the most successful plan was to walk boldly in the direction of or past the buck, edging in quietly, and only taking a shot, in the standing position, when within easy range; the antelope being so accustomed to the presence of people working in the fields, or passing from village to village of the plain, that the adoption of a confidently casual manner, while showing one's self openly to their watchful gaze, was almost invariably successful with an animal that judges of the harmfulness of an object by the apparent quality of its guile.

Let one attempt a regular stalk, however, even with the aid of good cover, and it would be fortunate if some wary doe did not perceive and give timely warning of the impending danger.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above is that, if you desire to make antelope-shooting a real pleasure and a true exercise of skill, there must be no trading on this one weak point of an otherwise extremely wide-awake creature.

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Another condition is the use of a light and handy small-bore rifle, and the smaller it can be, with due regard to effectiveness, the better. Delicate the sport, delicate also the means thereto. This will make as much difference between buck-*shooting* and buck-*stalking* as that which separates the rude taking of a fish from his element with the snatch-hook and the subtle beguiling of some wary chalk-stream trout by means of delicate tackle and the most cunning presentation of the dry-fly. Besides this, the pursuit of antelope, conducted on such lines, will afford ample scope to all the powers of the greatest glutton for difficult stalking and hard work.

Although antelope show no distrust of the human taint when the owner thereof is in full view, they will be found to behave very differently should he be concealed in any way; and by the man who takes to stalking pure and simple, after having been in the habit of employing other methods, will be found to display astonishingly keen perception of scent. Indeed, I have known men who have shot plenty of antelope aver that these animals have no apparent scenting power—the reason of this misconception being that buck rely much more on their keen vision to preserve them from the dangerous proximity of human enemies. They will nearly always be found extremely difficult—almost impossible—to "drive," and, by reason of their experiences with native professional netters and snarers, exasperatingly shy of all efforts to guide them towards any given spot, even up-wind, which is the usual course they take in changing ground.

One hears a great deal about the "fatal curiosity" of all deer. Is it not rather a desire to probe the quality of the suspected danger and avoid imaginary alarms that prompts this so-called inquisitiveness, especially when the object of distrust resembles any of their possible animal foes?

Buck-stalking may not sound particularly interesting to some seasoned *shikáris*, but, after a long and difficult

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approach, when at last one lies behind the sheltering bush or mound of earth, one's efforts are surely amply repaid by a close survey of the interestingly unconscious game, especially when aided by a binocular glass. The amusing antics of the young fawns, the ever-suspicious and wakeful mien of a sentinel doe, or the dignified behaviour of the glossy black master of the herd, whom one may even now spare unless the attractions of an unusually fine pair of horns should overcome other promptings, all form a picture of engrossing interest to the man whose soul is not too lofty to descend to such comparative trifles.

A clear, sharp morning in the cold-weather season, as the dogcart bowls merrily along the hard white road, passing a country cart or two that their muffled-up drivers turn aside with jingling of bells; swathes of white mist lying along the yellow stubble and the fresh green of the *rabi* crops, and mingling with the smoke of the early fires that rises from the village by the ford; a jackal slinking off across the fallow; the whirr of a startled partridge from the roadside; the red orb of the sun rising through the mists of dawn to his inexorable work of the day; the halt by the roadside, where we meet the bullock cart, to transfer the lunch-basket; the start across the level, far-stretching antelope plains; and then, the morning's sport adjourned, the shade of yonder thick wide-branching old mango tree, lunch, a bottle of nectar-like beer, and a quiet smoke. Does not that recall many a pleasant day in this much-maligned land?

Besides buck, the plains yielded us chinkára and nílgae, that is to say, in the neighbourhood of the lower foot-hills; and the latter being in those regions a very different animal to the typically confidential blue-bull, capital stalking they afforded as they wended their way into the low hills in the grey of the morning after a night spent among the crops of the open country. The beef-loving Mahomedan of the native city and bazaars had long since driven

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most of the nilgae from the ground within easy reach of cantonments; but a dozen miles or so along the base of the hills, either west or east, brought them within reach of the sportsman.

Of course, these large antelope are a perfect scourge to the cultivators whose fields lie near their haunts, and are subject to the depredations of *Portax pictus*, or, as he has lately been quaintly but suitably renamed, *Boselaphus tragocamelus*. So it was quite a common thing, on cutting one up, to discover a native bullet or slug embedded in its flesh, enclosed in a cyst of hardened gristly tissue. The blue-bull is a strange creature indeed, with his high withers, lean horse-like head, thick crest, drooping quarters, and cow-like tail, and very similar in build to many African antelopes. What a trophy he would afford did he only grow horns in accord with his enormous bulk—horns, for instance, like those of the sable antelope of Africa, whom he in many ways resembles!

The range of hills lying to the north of Junglypur were at one time the home of many bison, but, what with the unremitting attention of sportsmen, the insidious and continual attacks of the poaching native, and the enclosing of their haunts within forest reserves, by which the jungles are preserved from the annual conflagrations so beneficial to the grass and other food products of the wild bull, these grand animals have dwindled in numbers till, to prevent their utter extermination, rules have been framed to limit the number allowed to be shot to two bulls per annum. These measures have, it is believed, been beneficial, and although these unburnt, dry, grass-choked reserves can never now support more than a very limited number of gaur, their further destruction has been stayed.

Illustrative of "life's little ironies," I was once out in those hills, about half a day's ride from cantonments, with a friend who had secured the permission, so difficult to obtain, to shoot one of the bison allowed that year,

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while I was limited to the sámbar, bears, etc., which were conspicuous by their absence. My companion, after several days' fruitless labour in the search for his one bull, had given it up in despair, and had joined forces with me to have a final beat for sámbar ere leaving the locality. As I sat behind a tree-trunk, near a tiny clearing on the hillside, there came a crashing of bamboos, and lo! a mighty bison.

Climbing a knoll not fifty yards from where I sat, the great bull emerged on the open, and paced solemnly along, till he got my wind and came to a sudden halt. I had now despatched my orderly, who accompanied me, to seek K—— swiftly and bear him the news that his bull had at last arrived and stopped the way; and only by a most painful effort of self-control restricted myself to "drawing beads" on various vital portions of my *vis-à-vis*.

Not catching sight of me as I sat behind my thick tree-trunk, and imagining, I suppose, that my disappearing henchman was the only cause of the human taint he had perceived, the bull moved slowly forwards till a distance of only some twenty paces separated us—a fine sight; his noble, solemn countenance crowned by the curly whitish-yellow hair that grew on his forehead between the spreading horns. Suddenly sighting me, he again halted, and, staring fixedly, snorted sharply. I remained perfectly motionless, however, and after a few more whistling snorts and stamps of his fore foot, he began edging round the tree, which I carefully kept between us. This sort of game went on for some time, the bull never much more than thirty yards away, after which, having described the best part of a circle round me and my tree, he turned away, after indulging in a prolonged stare, and the ridge of his great dark chocolate-coloured back disappeared behind some long grass. Following him gingerly, I suddenly started back on seeing him again facing me; and, this time, thought that he really meant business. Nothing

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would have given me greater pleasure than to have knocked him over, but for the feeling that it might be a disappointment to K——, who deserved the shot for which he had worked so hard in vain. I also reflected that a preserved bison had been shot by a sportsman not very far from here in order to save his life, and that the plea of self-defence which he had urged had been accepted with anything but a good grace. Stifling my natural impulses therefore, I gently retreated, keeping the bull in sight and longing for the arrival of my companion. The end of it was that the gaur went thundering down a steep hillside towards the main ravine just before K——'s arrival. He was not found again.

There were a good many panthers near Junglypur, chiefly found in the lower foot-hills and in the vicinity of villages; and these were shot in the usual manner, by sitting in a tree over a "kill"—either natural, or a bait previously tied up—or, what was much more deadly, by occupying a roofed-in rifle-pit, and picketting a goat within about fifteen feet of the loophole. A lonely perch in a tree was, however, the commonest stratagem, though obviously too patent to deceive a panther of experience.

The element of luck is too powerful a factor, however, in this tree-roosting, hole-haunting form of amusement, the most successful exponent of the art being a friend of mine, who never even troubled himself to keep silence, but coughed, yawned, and shook the tree with wide leg-stretchings at his ease. In this manner he bagged five panthers, within a few weeks, from the same tree.

The rapidity with which a bold or previously unfired-at panther will sometimes arrive before the watcher's hiding-place is phenomenal. On one occasion, about four o'clock in the afternoon, the writer, having climbed to his perch and seated himself, was busied in arranging the leafy shelter, when the tethered kid, that had been straining at

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TOO PATENT TO A PANTHER OF EXPERIENCE

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its bonds and yelling after the yet audible footsteps of his retreating men, gave a start, and rigidified into a silent stare. A fine panther stood there, not five yards away, with his upturned greenish-yellow eyes fixed inquiringly on the *machán*.

Another day we were sitting in a tall burgot tree over a tiger's "kill" during the early afternoon. A panther came unconcernedly down the *nála*, heralded by much "*tok-tokking*" of peafowl, and flung himself down gracefully directly below us. As he was not wanted just then, I amused myself by seeing how far it was possible to go without actually alarming him; and it was not until several biggish pieces of stick had landed flop on his sleek hide that he had appeared to find it uncanny, and moved off as nonchalant as he had arrived.

Then again, one evening, on returning to camp in the jungle, my servant told me that a panther had been seen crossing the forest road into a small dell, where a *khákar* now barked loudly at intervals. Seizing a kid, and hurrying off with it, we had barely time to tie it up and slip behind a bamboo clump, when a dry leaf cracked in the jungle, there came a light spring, a momentary struggle, and the head of the marauder rose over his fallen prey—to receive a deadly shot in the neck!

It is the easy success of such few opportunities that lures one into making a patient fool of oneself on the many occasions when luck is out, or the panther wary.

There is one particular ravine near here—the Dhár *khóra*—which is a sure trap for any foolish beast that may elect to occupy quarters therein. This deep glen winds up between tremendously steep hillsides to an abrupt *cul-de-sac* under a five-hundred-foot-high horseshoe-shaped precipice. There is but one way out—that by which the entrance was effected. Now and then a bear, panther, or other creature enters this gloomy ravine, to lie up among the bamboos and boulders under the cliffs; and, if the fact becomes

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known, it is not very long ere a grinning Korku appears at the *sahib's* quarters with the news.

A large and very cunning panther had been creating havoc with the cattle which are herded during the rains in the Barhánpur valley, of which the Dhár *khóra* is an offset. He would prowl nightly round the zariba in which the cattle were pounded, and, after very long and cautious reconnaissance, about the deathly hour of two in the morning, would select a suitable calf, stealthily leap the thorn hedge, and, almost before the startled herd was aware of his visit, crush back with his prey through some weak spot in the enclosure. Next morning the exasperated herdsman would follow the long dragging trail to some *nála* or nook, where, if small in size, only the head and pedal extremities of the victim would be left: if large, and so affording more than a comfortable bellyful for the spotted tyrant, the unconsumed remains would have been removed with a skill that usually baffled any attempt at discovery. On one occasion a long search revealed the carcase suspended on the branch of a tree far above our heads. The entire fore-part of a plump yearling calf, which could not have weighed less than 140 lbs., had been carried up the sloping trunk of a *taklai* tree that grew on the steep slope of a woody ravine. The smooth, soft, skin-like bark bore a complete record of the panther's engineering feat. He had left the remains of the calf most delicately and ingeniously balanced on a large branch that protruded from the main trunk, some twenty-five feet in air. One fore foot had been adjusted on a small excrescence in the bark, and this gave the carcase a perfect counterpoise. It would have been a difficult task to set three able-bodied men, working in broad daylight, and supplied with ropes.

At last this panther killed a laggard cow close to the mouth of the Dhar *khóra* trap, but lay up elsewhere. Next evening a goat of high vocal attainments was in-

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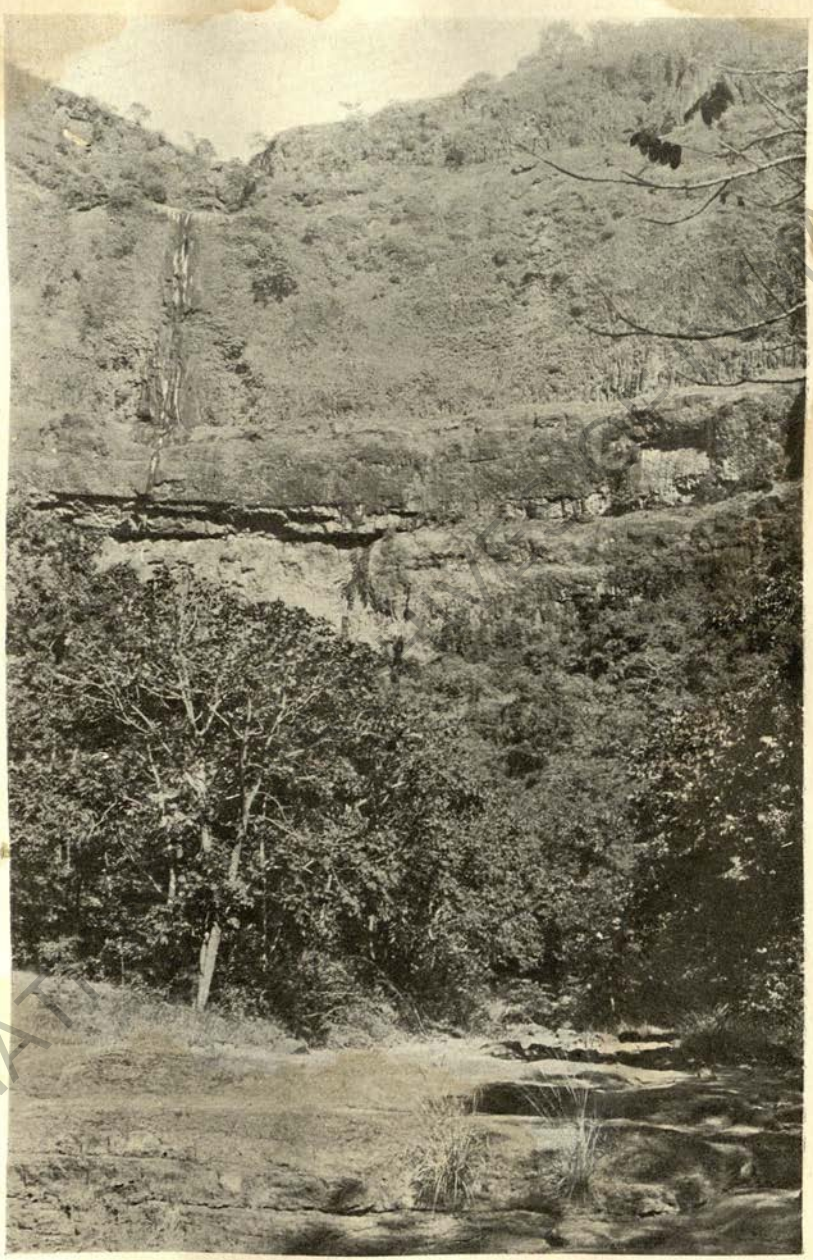

THE DHÁR KHÓRA

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vitingly picketted close to the natural "kill," and I sat up over it.

Not till well after dark on this moonless night did the panther arrive, and then the first intimation of his presence was a little gasp, that was choked into a sigh, as the garotted goat sank to earth. This was followed by a horrid sound, like the sharp ripping open of a carpet bag. Just able to discern the faint white of the brute's chest at that very short range, bang! went a charge of slugs. Silence. A few minutes later a furious tugging commenced, and again the white patch showed dully under the trees. Bang! again without result. After this we went home. During the night—which made the third time of his bold return to the "kill"—the panther polished off both the goat and the remains of the cow, after which feat of gormandising he left the tracks of his very comfortable and leisurely retreat up—at last—the fatal glen. Informed of this, I drove out next day, and on reaching the Dhar *khóra* found my flat-faced Korkus ready posted for the familiar silent beat. At the very last moment the panther turned sulkily out of the last bit of cover and slunk off round a corner—for all the world like a cat detected at the cream jug—presenting, however, no shot, as he turned up among the boulders of a dry watercourse at right angles to the main *nála*.

A stiff climb and détour placed me once more above his second line of retreat, and this time we all felt sure of him. However, the beaters came on slowly and thoroughly, arriving just below my post without any result. This was extraordinary; and an animated exchange of signals was in progress when there came a low whistle from my old orderly far below. He had disturbed the panther, which must have squatted in some hole and let the other men pass right over him.

And now the brute came gliding and leaping up towards me in that peculiarly heavy lumbering way which so often misleads one into under-estimating the panther's pace. By

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this time the Korkus had climbed out of the watercourse, which at this spot is practically a succession of dry water-shoots, as it falls precipitously from the encircling cliffs to the glen below.

Just below me was a small bit of cactus scrub, and in this our spotted friend came to a pause. I took the chance, hitting him, as I afterwards found, in the foot. The left barrel scored a miss, and, by the time fresh cartridges were inserted, he was sprawling up some precipitous rocks with the same deceptive lobbing gait. At the next shot, hard hit, he clung desperately to the smooth surface of a boulder, and fell back some feet; but recovered himself and crawled along horizontally, getting under a little ledge. He had now ascended into the base of the cliff, which hung beetling over us five hundred feet above the ravine, and nearer its base descends in perpendicular basalt scarps, alternating with short precipitous slopes of rubble and rock. Above one of these slopes he now lay in a sort of niche under the sheer rock-face, showing nothing but the end of his tail and the ridge of his back. Seeing that he was now in the hollow of our hands, I climbed some way higher, to get a clear view of him; then, with a man holding me firmly behind, got astride a little *salai* tree projecting from the dangerously steep hillside, and balanced self and heavy cordite rifle for the shot. The bullet struck fair on the panther's spine, and out he came, rolling rapidly over and over to the edge of the slope. Next instant he shot over as though impelled by a spring, and, every claw extended, described a beautiful curve in mid-air, to the accompaniment of astonished exclamations from the wondering Korkus. Falling through a clear hundred and fifty feet, like a yellow meteor, he disappeared into the ravine, still revolving; and then there came a distant but sickening thud. My orderly, warned by my cry to "stand from under," very nearly got the carcase on his head! Of course, that panther was as dead as a door-

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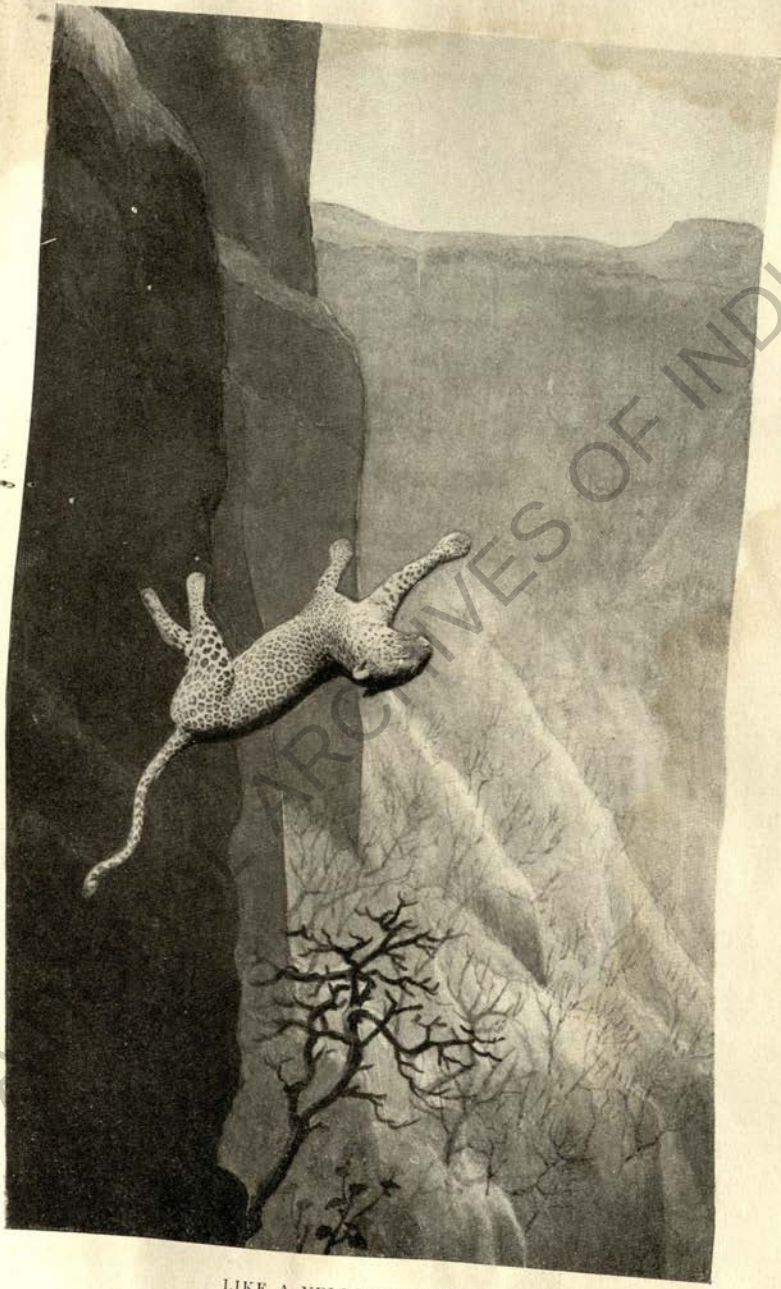

LIKE A YELLOW METEOR

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nail when I got down to him; and, luckily, his skin had not been damaged in the fall.

Sunset was now glowing behind the black cliffs, and the Dhar *khóra* lay already shrouded in cold shadow. After a refresher from the well-worn old tiffin-basket, we walked homewards through the darkening woods, Night suddenly casting her star-pricked mantle over the hills as the roosting cries of peafowl echoed mournfully abroad. As we passed the *gaoli's* encampment further down the glen, a shout brought the sturdy herdsman from among the already zariba'd kine to view his defunct enemy.—"*Wah! He* would trouble the cattle no more, and high time too. But others would take his place. *Achchha, sahib!* Róru shall be sent with news if more *gáras* occur—which *Bhagwán* avert!"—he mutters to himself; and we pass on. At length the roadside is reached near little Barhánpur, the panther is stowed under the seat, and the good mare, seeming to care nothing for her unwonted passenger, swings us swiftly away down the straight homeward stretch.

At present Junglypur is looking its very best. There has been a good rainfall this year, and there is promise of a splendid cold weather. The wide plains right up to the base of the hills are waving with plenteous crops. There is an unusual abundance of animal and bird life. Blackbuck and chinkára are to be seen within the station boundaries; pig appear to be plentiful in the *sendhi nálas*, where we hope they will stay after the crops are cut; and all night long, with wakeful shout, the watchers guard their fields from tall *macháns*. Up in the hills six miles away it is lovely. As you canter towards them at daybreak the red rim of the sun rising over the morning ground mists throws their sharply chiselled features into strong relief against the deep shadow of their glens and *khóras*. From remotest east to west stretches the long mountain range —a tall succession of golden-pink wall with deep purple fissures. Its peaks and valleys in such a cold clear atmo-

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sphere look almost toy-like, miniatures of mountain land, yet the former are nearly 2,500 feet above us, and that little ravine seaming their sides is four miles long. The country rises gradually to the foot-hills, and the crops grow less thickly as we approach them. Some open fallow land succeeds the tall *jawári* fields. There stands a herd of antelope, absurdly tame at this chill hour, as, huddled together, they gaze at the passing rider—the buck, though black, is not possessed of a head sufficiently good to tempt us. The hills begin to throw out long steep spurs; their hard outlines become softened by the jungle now distinguishable on their slopes. The little clump of *mhowa* trees at Bélkhéra comes into view a mile or two away. We shall leave our ponies there and strike up the long glen on foot.

This section of the hills is more rugged but less densely jungled than the loftier flat-topped ranges towards the west and interior. In the hot weather it is almost waterless, and the game has then receded to the regular forest country; but at this time of year it provides ideal shelter to animals, such as the sámbar, bear, panther, and smaller game, which seem to prefer it to the now thick green jungles of the forest reserve.

Very plentiful are sámbar this year. The forebodings caused by the havoc which the famine of 1900 undoubtedly caused among them appear to have been too gloomy, for there seems to be a goodly stock of hinds—each with a fawn—and stags are about, too, as many peeled trees testify.

We pursue almost the same track up the Bélkhéra glen as we did that morning on our way to look up the man-eating panther.

Now we are steadily toiling up the steep thousand feet of the Tór Ghát. When we sit down for a breather halfway up there is borne to the ear through six miles of clear dry atmosphere a faint and distant *Tupp!—Tupp!* of

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rifle-practice going on at the range far out on the plains below.

The scenery of these hills is well worth a stiff climb. I suppose it is the distance-annihilating atmosphere of India that renders them so comparatively insignificant when viewed from afar, since, during the rainy season, their summits, standing out above cloudland, assume their truer proportions. The visitor to these regions will be surprised to note the extent and depth of the chasm-like ravines, and the bulk and height of the elevated plateaux that lift their shoulders in all directions. Some of the higher peaks are composed of sharp and splintered basaltic rock inhabited by troops of *langúr* monkeys. At this season of early December the long grass is still green and luxuriant, its surface matted with the peculiar black bunches of ripening seeds which constitute the highly unpopular "spear-grass"; and the sportsman, if he be wise, will wear breeches made of good, new, stiff, khaki drill. Later on the spear-grass seed dries, and the tiny barbs, each of them a seed, drop to the earth. If the dry grass be parted after this has taken place the surface of the ground under it will be found thickly covered with a soft and furry brown fluff composed of these seeds—a wonderful provision of Nature against their total destruction by fire. When the big grass fires of the hot weather sweep over these tindery expanses the flame rushes by, merely scorching the upper layers of this fluff; and with the first heavy rain of the monsoon these solitudes are quickly reclothed in green.

The prevailing tree here is the *salai*, the light, graceful foliage of which is still unshed, and we may detect, here and there, one of their trunks standing red and frayed—the work of a sámbar stag who has been cleaning the "velvet" off his itching horns against it.

As we climb up slowly out of the deep valley there stretches out a rolling mountain region that is all our own,

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wander as we will, hunt as we will, for mile on mile in every direction. Water is now plentiful, even up here, and often one stumbles on a *lótán* or marshy hole, screened by tall red grass, where the big stags "soil" nightly in the mire.

At the northern end of the long Bélkhéra glen, and separated by the pass leading from it into the Pátóli valley, stand the two Jhákras (*barra* and *chóta*), their flat summits rising to a height of 3,500 feet. Far below their northern slopes lie some distant green patches, which are the scattered crops raised by the Korkus of Pátóli. To those crops the truculent stag, the watchful hind, and the callow long-limbed fawn descend, together with the shades of night. From his perch in the night-watcher's *machan* the indignant Korku hears the breaking of the succulent heads of *jawári*, as the deer pull them from their stalks: frantically he yells, and whacks his empty kerosene tin: from other fields comes the mournful clacking of more elaborate wooden rattles: the nocturnal marauders beat a hurried retreat, crushing many a long millet stalk to the earth as they go—to resume operations in neighbouring fields. The Korku nods drowsily again, a forlorn, black, blanketted silhouette against the stars: the night wears slowly on, gradually chilling to the dawn. By the first faint harbingers of dawn in the eastern sky a dark shape is seen approaching the lower slopes of the hill. It halts a moment; then a massive pair of antlers show against the pale horizon as it resumes its leisurely way. Halfway up the side of Chóta Jhákra, and just above the lower rock scarps, is a very pleasing *lótán*. As the false dawn spreads its green flush abroad, the stag heaves up from this mud wallow, scrapes his mud-plastered sides and grinds his rough horns against the sapling at its brink, and passes slowly on uphill. Higher still he may be seen rearing himself up on his hind legs against an *aola* tree, or moving about below it picking up the fallen fruit—hard,

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acid berries; then he saunters out of sight into a jungly hollow beyond. If we follow we shall see him "eating the sunshine," as the Korkus say, basking in the early beams of the sun, perhaps lying down on some open spot, and rising again, once or twice, before pushing his way into that dense patch of long *rausa* grass, under the thick shade, where he will finally settle down in his "form" for the day. In such a lurking-place he will lie as close as any hare, his head pressed earthwards as you pass unconsciously by. Here also he will sit tight until the beaters are almost on him, when, with a rush and a bound, he will, specially if an old and wary fellow, break back through the line and be off to some other retreat.

This morning I had intended working the northern slopes of Barra Jhákra, but was met on my way thither by two Korkus, who told me that a stag had been seen, and marked going home, up in the spot that I have described—a shallow jungly depression, just below the crest of Chóta Jhákra; so I turned aside and took a little path leading to this hill, which was about two miles off. Old Lallu, Jhápu, and several Korkus from the village of Bánur had the stag marked down. He was somewhere in that cup-shaped corrie, but they could not exactly say where. It was rather a difficult affair for one rifle, since the stag might take almost any course when roused. As a rule, there are certain routes which game, aroused in certain localities, will take when startled, and these are often known to the jungle-man; however, on this occasion a mistake was made. I took up the best apparent position, posted stops, and the beat began a long way off, round a shoulder of the hill.

I have heard "beating for sámbar" criticised as a most unsportsmanlike method—"stalking is the only legitimate means of shooting deer," etc. I am afraid these armchair critics know but little of *Cervus unicolor*, the real Simon Pure, as found "at home." There are, of course, rare

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occasions when these deer may be stalked—I have done it myself; but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the thing, in its stricter interpretation, cannot be done in his Central Indian fastnesses. A belated stag may be found at very rare intervals in ground suitable to a real stalk; a stag in horn during the rains may offer a like opportunity; or you *may* hit off and intercept a beast going home in the twilight of the dawn; but these are exceptions to the rule that this cautious nocturnal animal is usually well into his thick jungle by the time it is light enough to see your rifle-sights, and once there you will rarely move him, so as to get a shot, unless you rouse him with beaters. Then, again, this beating for sámbar rarely results in having the deer walked up to your post to be rolled over in inglorious ease: the beaters are merely the finders, the rousers of the game; when that is done the affair has only begun. The stag may take almost any line; the sportsman's business is then to intercept him, cut him off, watch him till he halts, and then creep in on him, etc.—tactics that look very simple on paper, but which cannot be recommended to the lazy or poor-conditioned sportsman, accustomed perhaps to the comparatively confiding habits of spotted deer, swamp deer, etc., whose habits and habitat admit of finding and stalking in the more orthodox way. These peculiarities of sámbar *shikár* make it sufficiently arduous and exasperating to offer attractions when tamer sport has begun to pall on one. Anything like big bags are practically out of the question; blank days are conspicuously to the fore; and since it is peculiarly difficult to make an accurate estimate of the size of the stag's horns, the greatest care has to be exercised to avoid the slaughter of full-grown stags with small heads. The ten hours of a cold-weather day in the bracing air of these hills seem disappointingly short when spent in the pursuit of wary old "Dhánk."

The beat began, as I have said, and, after a while, an

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excited yelling began, ceased, and I learnt that two stags had broken back. This should have warned us, but the beat was resumed on the same lines. I could see a man here and there, as the beaters came along the woody hillside; then they reached the spot I had marked as likely, had almost passed it, when there came a yell of excitement and a crash! Up jumped a big black stag right among the howling Korkus, three hundred yards away, and rushed back through the line; stood an instant—a perfect picture—with the sunlight glinting from his polished horn tips; then dived under the trees, showed his yellow rump an instant, and was gone! He had been lying in that patch of long grass, under the thickest shade he could find, and when I examined the place it was reeking of that peculiar sickly-sweet odour which big stags have at this time of year. This stag left little trace of his retreat, but the lie of the ground pointed to his having gone round the shoulder of the hill towards a big *khóra* which runs up from the lower-lying Barhánpur valley. Some hours were spent in working through the neighbouring depressions on the west side of the hill, and a couple of hinds, a fawn, and a brocket passed below me—all taking the same route down a long spur to this *khóra*. One of the men said he saw a big stag as well, but no trace was found of him. Finally, we descended and tried our luck just above the upper end of the big *khóra*. I was watching, with my glasses, the men in the distance, when there was a sudden commotion, and a stag burst out of a small ravine in front of them, and came running along the slopes, about five hundred yards away, taking a line which would lead him a long way below me. There was nothing to do but to run for it down a break-neck three or four hundred yards of grassy, stony hillside, and cut him off; and I arrived, panting, just as he came racing over a sharp spur through trees and long grass. He swerved suddenly on noticing me, and I then noticed that his horns were small

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and in "velvet," so lowered the rifle, and he disappeared, unmolested, crashing down through thick jungle, in long, heavy, but sure-footed bounds.

The men climbed down to me in time, and I then heard that a very large stag, presumably my old friend of Jhákra, had again broken back. He had then been seen slowly making off, at his leisure, towards the spot where he had originally been roused. The stag which I had just seen was his companion, and had no doubt been made use of to cover his retreat by this cunning old beast, who had then sneaked off in the opposite direction. After resting by the nearest pool in the ravine below, and sampling the contents of the tiffin-basket, we returned to Jhákra and tried for the old stag, but without success. The afternoon was now wearing rapidly away, so, turning southwards, we left the big hill and worked through the cup-like hollows, nearer Barhánpur, for about an hour.

I was proceeding carelessly up one side of a little precipitous knoll, on the far side of which toiled the men, when the sharp crack of a twig caused me to glance up, and there, almost perpendicularly above me, and not sixty yards off, stood a monster stag—horns laid back, mane bristling, and tail standing stiffly out! His vital parts were protected, more or less, however, by a maze of branches, the smallest of which might have turned a bullet, and next moment he was off, at a lumbering canter: a snapshot was fired at him as he burst across an open space, and a despairing left barrel loosed as the huge black back and yellow rump disappeared with a lurch over the sky-line.

Shoving in fresh cartridges, I tore up after him—as he must cross a certain large open space of grass ere gaining the forest beyond,—and looked in vain for his dark shape, which ought now to be crossing the grass; but he had vanished. Moreover, no sound of his retreat could be heard in the coppices to right or left. We were just going

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THERE . . . . . STOOD A MONSTER STAG

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to examine the ground for blood, when, close in front, a great horn tossed in the spear-grass, and a choking gasp announced my good fortune at last.

The Korkus would have it that this was our old twice-met friend. If so, then there was certainly luck the third time.

He was a very old and mangy fellow, with long and half-healed gashes over his brave old front, and one of his brow tines had been broken near the tip in the late rutting season's encounters. My extremely lucky last shot had caught him far back and high up; but the liver shot is scarcely less quickly fatal than a bullet through the heart, and he had never reached the covert he had sought.

The quivering of an eyelid was sufficient to satisfy my orderly's conscience as, with a muttered "*Bismillah illahu Akbar!*" the knife completed the ceremony of *hallál*.

And now the declining sun gave warning that the return journey should be begun. Without a moon it is awkward to be overtaken by night on those rough hillsides, so with a parting injunction against my next visit and the stag's severed head being borne by one of the men, we hastened towards home along the precipitous, wall-like saddle-backs which separate the Bélkhéra and Barhánpur valleys, descended by twilight a narrow rocky path that falls, turning and twisting, down their rugged sides, and at 7 p.m. found the ponies at the village. Four miles or so over a stony cart track by starlight brought us to cantonments.

In common with most wild tribes, the Korku is a timid creature before a stranger, and on meeting the *sahib* on *shikár* intent, often becomes so secretive that neither wild horses nor even the almighty rupee would drag from him any local knowledge of which he may be possessed. The sportsman will find this secretiveness very baffling; and to what lengths the jungle man is capable of extending it the following narrative will reveal.

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One hot morning in May the writer and a companion had entered the jungle to investigate certain rumours that we had heard as to the presence of a tiger in the Ámbadóh ravine. Ámbadóh, the "pool by the Mango tree," is a delightful little spot in the Junglypur hills, and its extremely picturesque glen goes twisting and winding down between steep hillsides to join a large tributary of the distant Tapti. These jungles are, during the summer droughts, very bare, and the white and shrivelled grass exceedingly hot and choking; but here and there a *pipal* or banyan casts its grateful shade, and, in combination with certain charmingly secluded pools, overhung by lines of trees and evergreen undergrowth, serves to offer sufficient attraction to wandering felines.

H. and I passed the mango pool and went about a couple of miles downstream, quietly pottering along dry stretches of boulders and examining sand and dust for the necessary tracks. At a spot where a considerable tributary *nála* joins the main ravine lies a narrow bay of level soil, rather raised above the level of the floods; and here grows much long "burroo" grass, shaded by a few small new-leaved *mhowa* trees. Not far from the border of this little strath rises a spreading banyan; in the river-bed below lie some delectable pools. Soothed by the sylvan beauties of this spot, H. and I repaired to the water's edge, and, reclining in the shade, masticated a biscuit and raised aloft the pleasantly-gurgling water-bottle.

Anon, refreshed, we continued our prowl, and about fifty yards further on regarded with pleasure what we had come to see—the pugs of a tigress; but we failed to mark the prints of some smaller pads, or passed them by as those of hyæna or other lesser beast of the forest.

Up to this point we had been accompanied by four Korkus, whom we had met on their way to cut bamboos,

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and had persuaded to come so far with us. These people now desired to be excused, in order to attend to their work, and, we having casually inquired in which direction they would now proceed, they had indicated a course uphill and away from the river leading past the aforesaid banyan tree and "burroo" grass. So we left them drinking water and squatting on the laterite rocks. Half an hour later H. and I, accompanied by two of my own men, had explored about half a mile downstream, up a stale pug-marked branch *nála* and down again, when I remarked a suddenly thoughtful look on my old orderly's face, as he paused and seemed to listen to some distant sound; but the incident passed.

Not finding any more tracks downstream, we had turned and were retracing our steps, when we became aware of the four Korkus hurrying down the far bank of the river-bed. Surprised at this sudden departure from their original bamboo-cutting expedition, we stopped and called to them; but in a preoccupied kind of way they continued their course, one of them signalling that this was their path. Now, had my old fellow mentioned to me the cause of his previous pause and thought, subsequent events might have turned out very differently, but he did not. "Chance" was creeping in.

Motto for the jungle—"Suspicion should rest on every departure from the normal."

It was becoming hot in the deep-sunk ravine, and up we plodded, over pebble and sand, past the pug-marked pool—erasing the pugs—past, almost, the level bay and banyan tree, H. going along the farther bank. By the pool-side I stooped, and scooping up a little water, patted it refreshingly over my scanty locks. Then I replaced my sun hat and ascended a little bank on the higher ground to settle on a spot for our bait that evening.

"*Baurrgh-ha-waurrgh-ha-harrgh-a-waugh!*"

The deafening noise burst all around me in the vibrating

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air, stunning and confusing for a couple of seconds, until, elongated and flattened, the form of a tigress grew clear under the banyan tree close to my right front, as she rushed towards me, bellowing, and scattering the dried leaves. Behind her, two little brutes of cubs; they also in full song! My 12-bore ball-and-shot gun flew to my shoulder. The roaring comet came to a sudden halt. Finger on trigger, I took a few steps backward, then more; reached the edge of the bank; darted down it; and, pursued by the same disgusting outcry, made nimblest time across a mass of boulders—in some queer manner managing to watch my rear as I skipped along. Slowing down, I perceived H. making a flank movement in my direction, and joined him on the far bank behind another splendid old banyan tree. The two men were not far off, in a similar position. The roaring having ceased, we ascended our tree, handed up rifles, and reconnoitred.

The tree from which the tigress had made her demonstration was now about one hundred and ten yards away, and when I peered through the forked trunk of our refuge, there lay the tigress—like a big cat by the fire. She had gone back, and was lying in the shade, close to the gnarled trunk of the banyan, in full view. As the shot was not altogether an easy one, we agreed to wait a little, at least until a steadier hand would give us a better chance; and so continued to watch the tigress, who every now and then turned her head to look behind her, or to her left, in the direction of our tree. Her cubs she had no doubt sent on before her into the grass. At last, feeling steady, we had almost prepared to fire, when the brute slowly rose to her feet and paced gently forward. Even then the sights were aligned on her shoulder, and the trigger all but pressed, when she turned, and presenting a back view, glided into the long "burroo." About half an hour was now spent in trying to discover her new position, but the difficulties of the ground and cover defeated us, and we turned

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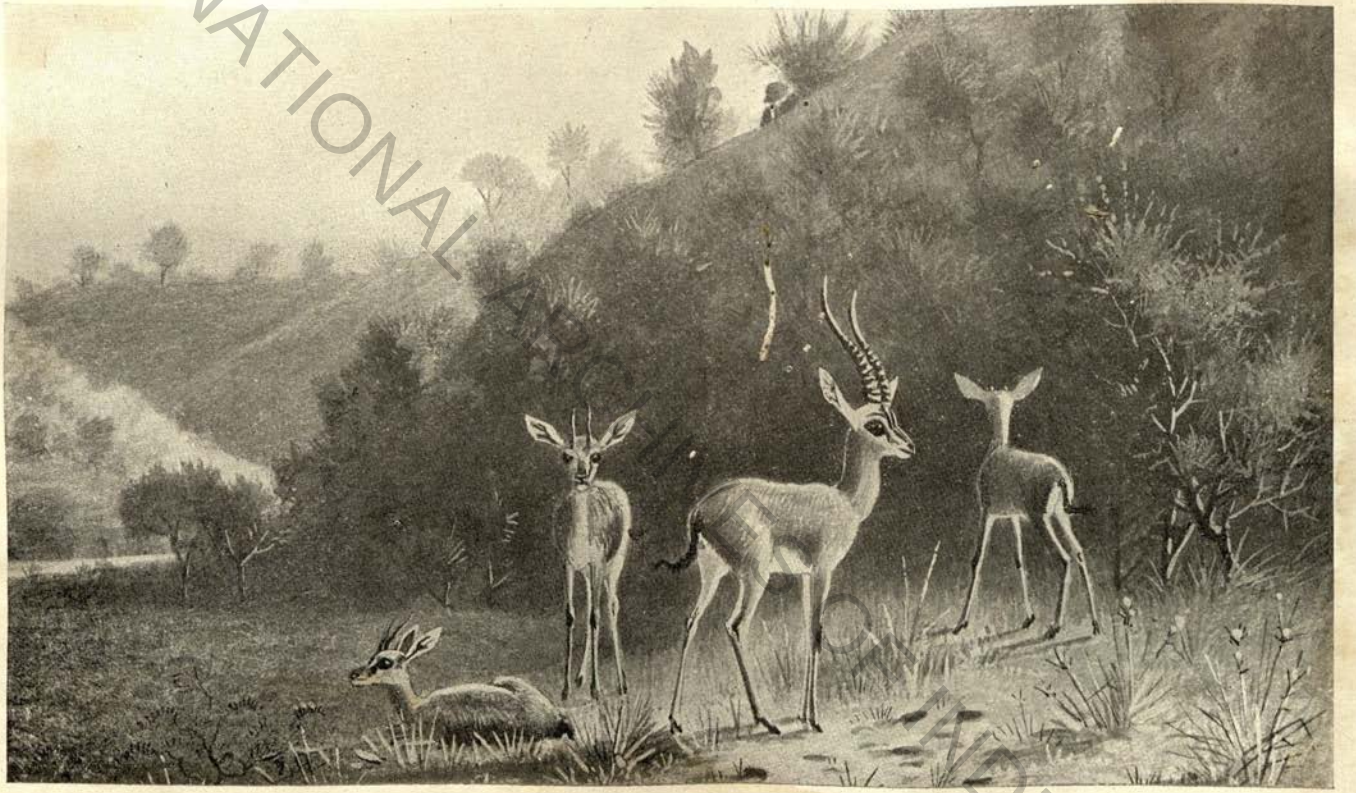

STALKING CHINKARA

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homewards, leaving her to another day mistress of the situation.

On my next visit, when I approached the spot from a different point and examined it with great care, I left a buffalo calf as bait. Finding the tigress had left the immediate neighbourhood, it was interesting to go over the scene of the previous day's excitement, and it was now seen that, when so suddenly stopped, I had arrived within about twenty-five yards of the family tree, from which the tigress had charged out for about ten yards. It is probably fortunate that instinct warned me *not* to fire on that occasion. As it was, the tigress gained her point, and was content with having covered the retirement of her cubs. As is usual in such very sudden encounters, I carried away only a fleeting glimpse of a tawny stretched-out form, and a memory of a peculiarly dark-red flank.

The experience of another occasion, on which almost the same tactics had been pursued by another "family" tigress, leads me to believe that it was unlikely that the brute would have followed me up, or made good her charge. Had she done so, I should have been forced to turn and shoot her—or try to do so—and it is difficult to say what would have then ensued. My orderlies, who were also armed, retired straight across the river-bed, and from their position could have aided me by their fire, had the beast come on; but as a most trustworthy man of this class once very nearly shot me when following up a wounded tiger, it is possible that I should have had more to fear from this direction than from the wild beast.

It remains to note that the four Korkus, though of course they deny it, came on the tigress after we left them, and were driven off just as I was. The thoughtful look on my orderly's face was due to the roaring which she had then indulged in; only it was too distant and indistinct, he says, to distinguish at the time, and so he had said nothing about it!

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The behaviour of the jungle men in not letting us know of the presence of the tigress was quite in keeping with their character, but it might have resulted in a melancholy incident—for me; for the tigress, having been already excited, was much more likely to "go for" one on being disturbed a second time at such very close quarters.

During the rainy season—June to September—there is, in our parts, little to be done in the way of *shikár*. The extremely tenacious state of the wet "black cotton" soil, which is also covered with tall crops of millet and cotton, precludes enjoyment of sport on the plains. In the distance the hills are seen smothered in dense fogs or driving rain-storms. When the clouds roll temporarily away, they stand out soft-wooded with rolling vegetation, and tinted of a wondrous blue.

Up there, just now, the jungle is extremely dense. The long green grass is, in many places, high over one's head, and soaking wet. Every forest tree and bush is in full leaf. Animals are scattered everywhere, wandering as they will, without restraint as to water or sufficient covert.

Sámbar are practically all in velvet, although here and there some mature old stag may possibly be found in hard horn, which he has not shed as usual during the preceding month of March or early April. To leave the beaten track, or the more open short-grassed plateaux, is to dive into a luxuriant and dense undergrowth, matted and knotted together with heavy foot-tangle and the snaky tendrils of the giant *Bauhinia* creeper; while fallen and rotting tree-trunks, rocks, and holes impede the difficult way, and disgorge battalions of the voracious grey-striped mosquito, who buzzes in his myriads under the dense shade cast by the large umbrella-like leaves of the *taklai*, bastard teak, teak, and other rain-breaking trees.

In the larger teak forests the undergrowth is perhaps a little less dense; but the grass is often much longer.

The huge rough leaves of the teak, flapping and scraping

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mournfully together in the moisture-laden wind, take the raindrops with a metallic patter. Great masses of yellowish-white blossom adorn their heavy heads. The woody hill-sides rise sheer, their emerald heights concealed in drifting mists, which ever and anon drench the forest in torrential downpours. There is a sound of many waters abroad. In the valley a broad river brattles clear and amber-tinted over its shingly bed. The red muddy floodtime is past, and the once friable earth is again bound firmly down by the monsoon verdure.

Fevers and dysenteries wait on the luckless sportsman who at such a season ventures to tarry long in these wildernesses, the general unhealthiness of which is not dried up until another four or five months have enabled the sun to strip off the thick leafage and get well at the roots of the long grass.

The higher plateaux, however, enjoy a very pleasant climate during breaks in the monsoon. Shrouded in dense white vapour—this is at an altitude of close on 4,000 feet—until the mists lift about eight o'clock in the morning, to display grand views of woody mountain scenery, one may prowl the lighter up-lying jungles and open grass land very pleasantly throughout the day in search of casual *shikár*, and in the evening enjoy a fire in the corner of the shooting-hut. The woods are full of orchids, wild balsams, moss, ferns, and tinkling streams. It might be a region very remote from India's plains; yet, only a few miles off, down below, our little cantonment lies sweltering in the muggy atmosphere of one of the hottest provinces in the land.

Large herds of cattle are pastured on these uplands now, and the herdsmen are not averse to furnishing news to the sportsman when a wandering tiger or a leopard takes his toll of them. Other methods being futile at this season, a patient seat in a tree is the only way of bringing the feline to book; and he may now return to his "kill" at

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any time of day, especially when the mist-banks settle down on the woods. The writer has known tigers thus shot at midday and early in the afternoon. However, as already noted, there is little sport to be had in the rains near our little Junglypur, although a tramp along the open, outlying foot-hills, where the soil is gravelly and the going hard and dry, will repay the wandering rifleman by many a charming stalk at gazelle and antelope.

Localities like this little station of ours, where some pottering sport, as has been described, may be had within a walk or ride of one's quarters, are now few and far between in this deteriorating land.

Poor old Junglypur! In spite of its drawbacks, its admittedly bad climate, its loneliness, some of us will ever have a soft corner for it in our memories.

Many the jolly day spent on its plains, and in its jungly hills, and in its comfortable old-fashioned little mess, the walls of which bear silent testimony to the sport it has afforded to more than one generation of sportsmen. To us, apparently the last of these, it has given of its best—scarcely comparable with the "best" of its palmy old days—but something nevertheless.

Tigers, panthers, and leopards, bears, bison; many a fine sámbar—among which may be counted trophies magnificent even in a region where the "rusa" is at his very best—beside nílgae, barking deer, four-horned antelope, etc., and, in the open country, chinkára and antelope in great numbers. Also some pig-sticking; and a little small game shooting, the best day, to my recollection, being a yield of a hundred head, including seventy hares.

But all this is over now, for Junglypur is numbered with those deserted camps scattered about India, where a few grass-grown plinths, a row or two of once grateful trees, and a forsaken cemetery mark the mournful spot where a colony of the ruling race once lived and died and had its day.

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From the carriage window, as the train creeps across the rich level plains of one of India's most fertile provinces, can be seen, flung along the horizon like some purple silken drapery, the distant line of the hills that look down on little Junglypur and the country which gave us many a happy day's sport. Last time I passed that way my eye rested with many pleasant memories on their highest point, that I knew lay close to the little cantonment where, but for the game it afforded, I should have spent the dullest days of my life.

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THE VENGEANCE OF JHÁPOO THE GÓND

THE little coasting steamer swung slowly away from the pier-head in the wonderful light of a long northern evening, the long wedge of her wash travelling in lines of smooth regularity over the placid surface of the sea-loch, and the gulls flapping and dipping in her seething wake.

The scene was one common enough on the north-west coast of Scotland, with its translucent green water, gaunt pier, colley dog, and jerseyed Gael—backed by a steep pebbly shore, whitewashed slate-roofed inn and post office, and long stretch of green-brown hillside. On the pier at my feet lay portmanteau, rod, and creel; beyond the hills at the end of this small arm of the sea—according to my Ordnance map—a number of likely-looking "lochans," or mountain tarns. Beyond the little settlement, its shores followed by a stretch of metalled road, the waters of the Highland fiord bent suddenly out of sight round a miniature headland, on whose granite rocks some black cormorants perched, drying their outstretched wings. A few terns hovered and screamed over the yellow seaweed that was exposed by a dead low tide.

Mine host of the inn, a fine burly Scot, led the way across the road to show me upstairs to my comfortable, if small, rooms, the windows of which looked out over the calm waters of the sea-loch; and in answer to my inquiries

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concerning the angling to be had in the neighbourhood, delivered himself cannily enough.

"Yess!" he replied in his heavy way. "There would be a wee bit fushin' still, but no in any of the lochans ahint the hull.' They're feenished!" he added.

This was a disappointment; and it must have shown itself in my face, for, after a lengthy pause, he continued,—as if to himself—

"Aweel! There'll be Lochan Dhu whatever! A 'dour' loch she'll be forbye. But she'll be a late watter ye ken, and"—glancing out of the porch as he followed me into the evening air—"it's no that cauld, but ye'll rise a good few troot in her still!"

Next morning found me early at Lochan Dhu—or "the little black loch"—a long deep sheet of dark peat-stained water lying in an obviously once glacier-ploughed valley, sedge-fringed, and with a boggy shore.

The "troot," which were mostly of small size and dark in hue, were at last rising pretty freely to my flies, and it so happened that, forgetful of the warning of the innkeeper earlier in the day, that I should keep to the eastern shore of the "watter" and well away from the property of somebody whom he had called "the Colonel," and being also deeply engrossed in my sport, I had wandered well down the western side.

Sitting down to re-tie my flies, with my back to the moor, I suddenly became aware of a step on the heather, and a shadow fell alongside as a hard voice rasped out—

"Who the devil are you, sir, and what are you doing on my water?"

Glancing up, I saw a strongly-built wiry-looking old gentleman clad in knickerbockers and Norfolk jacket, with a weather-beaten, sun-lined face, and keen dark eyes frowning down on me; and being somewhat disconcerted at the sudden discovery that I had forgetfully strayed from the eastern side of Lochan Dhu, I blurted out—

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"Good morning! I'm afraid I have been poaching. But the fact is I forgot all about this side being private property, and——"

"So I see!" broke in the old fellow sarcastically. "Wonderful how alluring that 'other side' always is! *Ulterioris ripæ amor*, eh? I suppose that d——d fellow Frazer at Lochend sent you up here?"

"He did," I replied. "But he warned me to keep to the eastern side of the loch; so you must blame me, not him."

"Humph!" grunted my interlocutor. "Well, the sooner you get out of this, the better I shall be pleased—so off you go at once! Do you hear me, sir?" he repeated wrathfully, as I continued knotting my cast. "'At once' I said!"

The rough, commanding tones of the old gentleman's voice so annoyed me, however, that I purposely lingered over my preparations. Reeling up very deliberately, I picked up the two or three trout that lay on the grass, and, in spite of the snort of rage I heard, transferred them coolly to my fishing-basket. After that I laid down my rod, and turning my back on the irate owner of the western shores of Lochan Dhu, took out my cigar-case, selected one of my very last Indian cheroots, and lit it slowly and methodically. Then I gathered up my tackle, and, ignoring the old boy's presence, walked off round to the opposite side of the loch, where I started getting out my line again.

The fish had ceased to take, however, and I kept moving slowly down the boggy shore, casting now here now there as I went, till unexpectedly I found myself fast in a heavier fish than any I had hooked that day. I played the trout to an end, floating belly upward; but in endeavouring to half lift, half slide him to shore over a bed of floating weeds, there was a little snap, a feeble splash, and the rod straightened.

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A chuckle caused me to glance round. A short way behind me to my right sat the old gentleman whom I had lately so unpleasantly encountered. This time he appeared to be in better temper.

"Awkward place to land 'em," he observed.

I nodded.

"That's an Indian cheroot you're smoking?" he suddenly said.

"It is," was my laconic response.

"Smoking it right down to the end too!" he soliloquised. "Home on leave?"

I looked at him again. Why, of course; he was a retired "Anglo-Indian." "The Colonel," Frazer had called him, had he not? I wondered how I had been so blind. His manner, his hard-bitten looks, the brown and corrugated appearance of the back of his neck——

"Yes!" I allowed, mollified all of a sudden, so instantaneous in its effect is that freemasonry that tends to draw together those who have sojourned in the East. "Have one, sir?" I added, fishing out my cheroot-case and offering it him. And so our acquaintance began.

It was not long after this that at the invitation of the old Colonel—whom I will call Mulligatawny—I found my kit transferred from Frazer's inn to the extremely comfortable shooting-lodge in which my new-found friend was in the habit of spending a large portion of the year. "I was always a jungle-wallah," he said, with a deprecatory smile, "and I find that a run down to town now and then, or a short visit to the few other old fogeys of my time who have settled in England, is quite enough for me. You may call this my home!"—and he waved a bronzed and freckled old hand round at the dark hills, the house in its wooded and beautifully kept grounds, and the placid head of the sea-loch reflecting the dark fir trees, where his little steam launch lay moored to her buoy.

I will not linger over a description of the extremely

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pleasant month I spent at Alt-na-skiach: the excellent rough shooting, the autumn salmon-fishing, or those pleasant trips in the launch about that gloriously picturesque western coast so deeply bitten into by the wild Atlantic booming close outside; a time to which I look back with the greatest pleasure and affection, brightened as it was by daily contact with one who possessed to an unusual degree a charm of manner and personality that seems characteristic of a somewhat bygone day. I became much attached to old Mulligatawny. His death, a few years since, came to me as a great shock.

The Colonel's house was simply packed with trophies of the chase, almost entirely those secured by him during a lifetime of service spent in India. Here the somewhat puny if handsome horns of the Scottish red deer, killed on Alt-na-skiach itself, contrasted widely with the huge rough and massive beam of the Indian sámbar; there the ponderous head of a buffalo or bison looked down on a case of local sea-birds. But the most notable feature of the whole collection was the enormously large proportion of tiger-skins and tiger-rugs set on the walls, laid on the floor, or flung luxuriously over the furniture, and the tigers' heads set up and grinning ferociously from glass cases; while two rows of long shelves in the museum were entirely given up to an array of bleached tiger-skulls of unusual size.

I had often remarked on this redundancy of tigers, and old Mulligatawny would reply, "My dear boy, these are only the few that I have kept by me of a very much larger collection that I brought home on retirement."

"But what an enormous number of tigers you must have bagged!" I insisted, eager to profit by his large experience. "And how did you do it? You must have had very unusual opportunities, or marvellously good methods——"

But it was always at this point that the Colonel became

uncommunicative; and I had never succeeded in drawing from him the secret of his success.

Another matter that had excited my curiosity was a large chest or box of unusual shape and Indian manufacture, measuring about three feet high and a couple of feet square, that rested in the hall directly below the skin of an immense tiger, that, with its stuffed head raised on a bracket, was mounted on the wall. This box or casket appeared to be made of "shisham" or "blackwood," and was profusely adorned with innumerable copper clamps and embossed nails in true native style, resembling closely the cash chests used by *bunniahs* or Indian merchants.

In outward appearance the box was enormously heavy; but, accidentally knocking against it one day, I had discovered that it was really astonishingly light. It bore traces of long-continued use and much travel; and I had noticed that the Colonel's eye often rested on it with a preoccupied expression. The only person I had ever known to handle the chest was Abdul Ghani, a silent and faithful old Muhammadan butler, who still acted as body-servant to the master whom he had served so long in the East; and him I had found once or twice quietly polishing it with oil and a rag in his native way.

At length the time had come for me to bid adieu to my host. On the morrow the weekly steamer would carry me southward on a journey that—allowing for a short stay in town—would end only in the distant military cantonment in India, to which my regiment had been ordered on relief during my absence on leave.

The equinoctial gales had been threatening for some days, and the night wind was whistling wildly inland from the loch outside, as old Mulligatawny once more filled up my glass, and, raising his own, drank affectionately to that next meeting which—alas!—we were fated never to realise.

A bright fire crackled on the hearth and shed its warm

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glow on the antlered walls of the hall, on the skin of the big tiger, and on the shining copper rivets of the mysterious chest beneath it. The grateful smoke from our cheroots curled slowly aloft. And it came about that on this our last evening together old Mulligatawny told me the tale which I now repeat, so far as I can recollect, word for word.

"I have noticed, Alastair," he began, "that you are in the habit of cocking your eye at the *bunniah's* chest over there, and no doubt you have often speculated on its business here and what its contents may be. Before I go further, however, will you promise me to execute a small commission for me, and take the box back to India with you, either for delivery to a native agent whom I shall name, or to dispose of in another manner—which may suggest itself when you learn its history?"

"My dear Colonel," I returned cheerfully, "I am very much at your service, as you know, and shall be only too happy to do so."

"It is long since I have cherished a desire to get that chest back to its native land," continued the old gentleman, "but it has hitherto been practically an impossibility, owing to those infernal Customs people, who are at liberty to break open anything, regardless of the feelings of the owner. I have, therefore, not been able to employ the usual agents in this matter.

"I am extremely reluctant to ask you to do this for me, Alastair," he went on, "the reason for which you may shortly realise. But in you I see the last and only opportunity of fulfilling my portion of a bargain made long ago on my solemn pledge and word of honour. Forgive an old man for capturing such a promise in such a manner, but you *will* promise me this, my dear boy, for the sake of our friendship, will you not?"

Somewhat surprised by the solemnity of Colonel Mulligatawny's manner, who, leaning forward, seemed to await

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my reply with an unusual seriousness, I repeated that nothing would give me greater pleasure than to carry out his request; whereat the old fellow fell back into his chair with a sigh of relief, and puffed away awhile in silence.

"You will wonder," he continued, "what all these tiger-skins may have to do with the chest about which I am so anxious; but I may now tell you that the extraordinary success which I have invariably commanded in my tiger-shooting days was entirely due to its contents."

Noticing a perplexed look on my face, the Colonel's eye twinkled. "I can see, my boy, that my words puzzle you," added he. "Perhaps before we go further it would be as well to have a glance at those contents."

So saying, he dived into his pocket and produced a single heavy key of strange appearance. The ghost of a smile flitted across his face, he rose, and I followed him across the polished floor.

The house was closed for the night, and the old housekeeper must have long since retired. The only person up besides our two selves would be old Abdul Ghani, who had brought in the wine earlier in the evening, and now probably lay asleep, native fashion, on the floor of the distant pantry. Round the lodge the Atlantic wind howled dismally, tossing about the groaning branches of the firs, or tearing at the creeping ivy that tapped and swept the darkened window-panes.

The Colonel was on his knees before the chest. The key grated stiffly in the long-disused lock. As he raised the rusted lid with some difficulty, I stepped forward and lent a hand; and, giving way suddenly, it flew open with a jerk.

Next instant I sprang back, wide-eyed, with a sharp exclamation of horror!

A strange faint odour—one that with lightning speed flung my memory back over all those thousands of miles to the distant redolent East—came wafting up heavily

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from the long-shut casket; that indefinable aroma of cocoanut oil and general oleaginousness that pervades the persons of our Aryan brethren.

The Colonel was grasping me by the arm as I recoiled. "Steady, my boy, steady!"—and he laughed a short, dry laugh. "Hold up, Alastair!" he cried reassuringly.

"My God, Colonel!" I gasped feebly. "How sudden! Why did you not warn me, sir?" I protested, smiling foolishly as the old fellow's chuckles continued to shake him, and he twisted up his short grey moustache in his merriment.

"Another glass of wine for Alastair *sahib!*" he ordered in Hindustani, and, turning quickly, I discovered the silent salaaming figure and inscrutable features of the old servant standing close behind us.

"Knew it would draw him!" continued old Mulligatawny, indicating Abdul Ghani with a jerk of his head, as the old butler poured out the rich red port for me. "Jhápoo never yet failed to fetch 'em up!"

"To Jhápoo be it, then!" cried I, as I drained the glass a "bumper" and felt the warm blood course back again through my veins. "To Jhápoo! And may his—er—skin never grow—er—loose!" I added.

"Bravo, Alastair!" shouted the Colonel, clapping me on the back. "By gad, my boy, the last man I played that game on—or, I should say rather, the last man who played Paul Pry on old Jhápoo—he had a fit!"

"I don't wonder at it!" I agreed, as we looked down into the chest with its fearsome occupant.

"Fine piece of work, eh, Alastair?" queried the Colonel. It was certainly a very fine bit of taxidermy. This is what I saw—

Fitted exactly into the inwardly padded casket, and evidently wired strongly to it by the soles of his feet, while a circularly indented piece of soft felt was arranged inside the lid so as to close down on the cranium, holding

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all fast, squatted, on his hams, the figure of a little black Gónd—a hill aborigine from Central India. Twisted up into the lank black hair was a ragged piece of once dark-red cloth. Another piece of coarse cotton, grey with dirt, encircled the loins. For the rest he was naked. The arms were supported naturally on the knees; one hand depended slack-jointed, loose-wristed, after the manner of those restful dusky peoples, the other was half-raised, with outstretched fingers, as if to compel a sudden attention and silence. And the eyes! Dark brown, yellow-stained, and bloodshot, altogether dissipated in appearance, they gazed out from that long-dead face with such a marvellous light, such an expectant confident alertness, as betokened, together with the half-parted lips, a sense of absolute conviction, and an unshakable confidence of exultant success. Never have I seen their like!

Old Mulligatawny's attitude had undergone a change, and a soft expression had stolen over his rugged features.

"My poor old Jhápoo!" he muttered. "I shall never see you again!" and he laid a hand sorrowfully on the bare bronze shoulder of the stuffed man.

"God rest his soul!" he added affectionately, gazing at the figure in the chest for several minutes. Then—

"Come, Alastair!" he jerked out. "Stand back!" There was a creaking rush as the lid descended sharply; a clang; a last whiff of that Eastern redolence; and the chest lay there before us, its secret hidden: lay there as it had lain so long. Ancient and interesting no doubt, but—a box; nothing more.

I glanced round. Abdul Ghani, too, had disappeared.

* * * * * *

"It is a long time, Alastair," said the Colonel, settling himself in his chair, "since I started on my career as an ensign in the good old 'John Company's' service; but I can remember it all well and vividly. I was always

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passionately fond of sport in any shape or form, and it was not long before the fascination of big game *shikár* overtook me to such an extent that I applied for and obtained an extra-regimental appointment in the Survey branch, joining a party that had been assigned the task of surveying a large portion of the then utterly savage and unknown jungly country that lies about the headwaters of the Tapti and Narbada rivers.

"In the course of our wanderings over those wild tracts all my leisure was devoted to the pursuit of game, with which that country then swarmed, and so great were my opportunities that ere long—though still a very young man—I had established a firm friendship and understanding with the aboriginal inhabitants, whose usual habits of secretive shyness were so relaxed in my favour that I had scarcely arrived in any of their villages before all the local news of wild beasts was being eagerly imparted to me.

"It was one scorching morning in the hot weather when, having completed the day's outdoor work, I was riding slowly through the jungle towards camp, that I overtook on the narrow path a jungle man and woman. In front, axe hitched on shoulder and bow and arrows in hand, stalked the husband; behind, patiently following in her lord and master's tracks, came the wife—a strapping Gónd girl, lithe as a pantheress, with bare limbs and deep bosom. On her head was poised a heavy bundle. As I drew near I noted with surprise that it was the freshly removed skin of a large tiger, neatly folded up, with the tail hanging and swinging free to one side.

"At the sound of my pony's hoofs the pair had turned and faced me. As I returned the Gónd hunter's salutation I perceived him to be a man of middle age and small, sturdy build, with piercing eyes and a free, athletic carriage. The Góndni, his companion, was much younger. She stood aside shyly, her naked brown breast heaving with

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the exertion of carrying the weighty tiger-skin, her simple cotton garment stained with the blood that had oozed therefrom.

"I learned that the tiger had been killed that morning by a party of native *shikáris*, and that the pair before me were now taking its skin to their village close by, near which my camp was pitched. And thus it was that I first met Jhápoo the Gónd.

"I need not describe how Jhápoo soon gave me evidence of his extraordinary mastery of woodcraft, an art that was marvellous even among a race famed for their prowess and cunning as hunters. Suffice it to say that I at last persuaded him to leave his native village and accompany me on my wanderings throughout all that part of India, and that he finally became my trusted head *shikári* and valued friend.

"It was not long ere I discovered that Jhápoo, in addition to his natural gifts of jungle-craft, possessed qualities which raised him considerably above the ordinary jungle Gónd, and enjoyed a notoriety among his fellows as the possessor of 'occult' powers, which caused him to be somewhat feared by them in consequence. Over the camp fire I had listened to many a dark hint of his capabilities in this line, but so shy was Jhápoo himself on the least mention of such a subject that it was not until he had been with me a great many years that I had an opportunity of becoming an eye-witness of his mysterious art. Meanwhile he had aided me in bagging many scores of tigers, besides panthers, bears, bison, and other lesser game. That Jhápoo, during his long service with me, may have secretly practised his uncanny arts and flattered himself that they, and not himself, were responsible for the almost unbroken chain of success enjoyed by his appreciative master, I have little doubt. But for me it was sufficient to enjoy and marvel at his wonderful skill in the application of apparently simple but really clever means in dealing with the wiliest tiger

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that ever roamed a jungle. Whenever there was a puzzling bit of woodcraft to accomplish, a particularly cunning beast to circumvent, it was my wont to call up old Jhápoo with a request that he should '*Jádoo karó*,'—make magic—knowing full well that the old fellow's inscrutable expression, which I delighted to watch on such occasions, merely hid the satisfaction he felt at utterly mystifying my other men. As to myself, his attitude was one of amused toleration, with a look as if to say he knew what I thought about it, and of course what the *sahib* did not know was not worth knowing!

"You may read about the marvellous craft of the American Red Indian, but I doubt if a 'Deerfoot' or 'Pathfinder' ever existed who could hold a candle to my Jhápoo. The man was a marvel. I could tell you tales by the score of his extraordinary skill at every branch of the game. His tracking! the way in which, single-handed, he would literally round up a tiger and guide it past my post! His unerring knowledge of every little peculiarity, sign, or even *thought* of the creatures we pursued—all these would fill a book from cover to cover.

"But I am wandering from the point; my tale concerns the very extraordinary occurrence that befell on the one and only occasion when Jhápoo initiated me into his mysteries—one that I would gladly never have experienced—and the still queerer things concerning the strange legacy he left me.

"It was the middle of the 'hot weather,' and we had been for several days on the track of a huge man-eating tiger, that infested the jungles of Mánjród, bordering the river Tapti. He had his beat among the rudely cultivated tracts that lay along the course of the river and appeared as little oases in the sea of jungle that in those days covered the surrounding country; and it was now here, now there, at those little clearings, that he would appear, sometimes in broad daylight, carry off his human prey,

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and retire to the fastnesses of long grass and thicketty growth that afforded him almost inviolable sanctuary. Even Jhápoo seemed nonplussed, and with difficulty concealed his chagrin behind an air of intense mystery. At length the time arrived when my work necessitated a move to a distant part of the country, and I was watching my servants packing up and striking camp. Jhápoo was seated apart, an air of abstraction concealing the mortification he endured, while from the movement of his lips, I made no doubt he was using the most horrible language concerning the man-eater's ancestry.

"As fate would have it, it was at this very juncture, late in the afternoon, that a villager came hurriedly in to inform us that the man-eater himself had just made an abortive attempt to carry off a man quite close to camp. A bullock-cart had been passing a piece of thick jungle on the banks of a tributary stream known as the Kókri *nullah*, when the tiger had emerged and made a dash for the driver. The latter had, however, been unseated by the sudden swerve of his bullocks, and had fallen clear, on which he immediately hurled himself over a high bank into the pool below. The tiger had apparently been startled by the overturning of the cart, and had beat a retreat; while the terrified oxen, tail on end, had galloped madly away in the opposite direction, with the wreck of the cart clattering behind them.

"Our arrangements were quickly made, and the single old elephant, which a paternal government provided for my more difficult work in the jungle, was soon under weigh. Jhápoo never cared much about the use of the elephant, but on this occasion the short period of daylight at our disposal and the unusual thickness of the covert necessitated my taking up a commanding position on the back of the pachyderm, while the old man picked up the track on foot under the muzzle of my rifle.

"It was unlikely that the tiger had gone far in so short

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a period of time; but the peculiar condition of the ground, which had been baked hard by the sun after a heavy thunderstorm, made it almost impossible to track. There was no dust. The covert, though thick along the steep banks of the winding Kókri, was of small extent and had been thoroughly worked through by the elephant. After a couple of hours of hard work it seemed as though we must confess ourselves beaten; and then the light began to wane.

"The elephant had been discarded, and Jhápoo and I stood in the deep-cut, boulder-paved, dry bed of the Kókri. The sun was dipping low on the horizon, and a comparatively cool air—the forerunner of an Indian dusk—was barely perceptible in the stifling heat. We had worked up to an elbow in the *nullah* close to a deep pool and not far from the junction of the Kókri with the broad and sandy Tapti. Jhápoo stood silently thoughtful, a dissatisfied look on his face as he gently and reflectively scratched himself. Suddenly he spoke in a low voice.

"'Send the elephant to camp, *sahib*,' said he; 'there is but one way now!' Then to himself he passed a few energetic remarks of the untranslatable kind, reflecting on the character of the female relatives of the beast which had given us the slip so long.

"Making his preparations with studied deliberation, and posting me on the high bank above, the old Gónd stood awhile in the rocky *nála* immersed in deep reflection. Night was swiftly falling, and the pale clear light of an almost full moon struggled with the yellow glow of a hot, dusty sunset. Suddenly in the dusk Jhápoo stretched out his hand and gathered some of the broad strong leaves of the crimson-flowered *dhák* tree; and choosing a round and polished stone of about the size of a man's fist from those at his feet, he wrapped it in the leaves until quite hidden. Then he walked out into the dim bed of the dry stream, lifted a heavy boulder,

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thrust the leaf-clad stone swiftly under it, and let it return to its original position. After this he retired out of sight under the overhanging bank; and the cleverly imitated cry of the *kóla-bálu* or solitary jackal—a most horrible, wailing sound—welled out thrice from below my feet.

"'*Phe-a-a-ooh!*'

"In spite of my amusement at the old humbug's attempts at playing the wizard, I must confess to a certain odd feeling of disquietude. Although the moon now brightly illuminated the surrounding jungle, falling palely through the interlacing fretwork of forest growth that overhung the bed of the deserted *nullah*, her rays were so interrupted by some heavy mango trees that my own post was shrouded in deep black shadow. I knew that old Jhápoo close below my bank was the originator of that spectral yell, but as it sank, echoing in that eerie place with its dying gurgle, a sensation of utter solitude prevailed, and the elemental feelings that are stirred by the lonely moonlit mystery of a shadowy woodland began to creep insidiously over me. Far down beyond a bend of the little watercourse I could distinguish the silver line drawn by the moon at the margin of a deep dark pool; the glittering stars pricked a luminous sky where it showed through the naked black branches of leafless trees; and, out beyond the dark patch of gloom in which I crouched invisible, the stones of the moonlit Kókri drew my gaze to that boulder which I knew concealed the mystic fetish placed beneath it by the old Gónd. A bat came fluttering close to my face, and a frog raised its lazy croak on the still hot air. Later on, there echoed abroad the mournful mewing of distant roosting peafowl, and, when that had died away, the sleepy trill of insects held the jungle in an absolute hush.

"It was long after this that I recognised the low 'cluck' of the tongue used as a signal between my old *shikári* and me, and, listening intently, I seemed to hear a stone turn

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softly somewhere downstream. A greyish shadow was emerging from the obscurity of the opposite bank with an expectant stealthiness. Slowly its whole length was outlined in the moonlight; and as the head turned inch by inch in my direction there shone out pale but clear the magnificent black and white cheek-tufts of an immense tiger! The brute was peering intently ahead, up the stony watercourse, slowly moving his great head up and down, and then sidewise, as he gazed out into the moonlight. The shot was a perfect one, at about twenty-five paces; but the strange behaviour of the animal before me caused me to stay the half-raised weapon in my hand. It was deathly still, but I could smell the tiger distinctly, and argued thereby that the air was setting gently in our direction.

"It seemed utterly absurd, but it was plain that the tiger's attention was riveted on something in the centre of the *nullah;* he was creeping forward at a snail's pace, and was actually passing us by!

"What bosh it all was! Yet—yes, it *was* the boulder he was watching; within a few paces of it the brute came to a standstill! Unseen under my bank, Jhápoo was clucking his tongue in a frenzy of impatience; but although my heart was thumping heavily against my ribs, I withheld my fire, every fibre tingling with curiosity of the great cat's behaviour. His tail stuck up in the air, and the ridge of his back caught the moon's rays on its bristling hairs. What would be his next move?

"At this moment—and I am certain he did it purposely—Jhápoo gave a slight cough. Instantly the man-eater's tail dropped; he crouched swiftly, and gazed intently up into the shadows surrounding us; next moment he would have sprung away, but I had thrown up my rifle and fired into him point-blank at a distance of a few paces. As the smoke cleared off, he lay gasping spasmodically on his side.

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"There was a clatter of stones, a rush, and to my astonishment out sprang the dark figure of the old Gónd; and, in a manner utterly at variance with his usual calm, raining imprecations the while, he reached the dying tiger and whirled down a hurricane of blows with his loaded cudgel—deaf to the loud cry of warning which I raised. Then up with a horrid gurgling '*Wough!*' rose a tawny mass, towered over its puny assailant, and bore him to the earth.

"Next instant I had jumped down, placed the muzzle against a huge ear and blown the skull inside to fragments, but, indeed, unnecessarily, for the brute was quite dead, and had already released its victim, who was struggling feebly to his knees. With a gasp of inarticulate passion the old man groped for his wretched stick, raised it aloft, and then staggered down sidewise."

The Colonel was silent for a few moments. He reached himself another cheroot, lit it slowly, puffed awhile, and continued the thread of his narrative.

"A bad business was that night's work, Alastair," he went on. "Dying effort though it was, the tiger had inflicted terrible injuries on poor old Jhápoo. What on earth induced the old fool to indulge in such idiotic behaviour I cannot tell; it may have been a desire to keep up the illusion, that pigheaded pride that some Indians possess in imagining themselves to be the vehicle of the supernatural. All that could be done we did for the old *shikári*. Antiseptics were perhaps not properly understood in those days. At any rate, whether it was from shock or a subtle form of blood-poisoning, Jhápoo, about the fifth day, began to sink. I had put him into my own office tent, and there, that burning evening in May, he asked to see me alone.

"Though failing fast, the old man had an eager glow in his keen eye, that eye, alas! that would no longer pierce for him or me the secrets of his beloved jungles, and I

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knew that he had great news for me. 'Real news!' whispered the old fellow, putting out his hand and salaaming in his old way, as he had so often done when bringing me his invariably reliable information of game. 'Tiger news!' he continued, chuckling gently to note my saddened air. 'Oh, my understanding is clear enough,' he repeated, reading my expression—'clear enough, *sahib*. Just three fingers of the *sahib's dáru*' (spirit), he went on. And I poured him out some brandy and water. Then he began.

"I can see it all now," murmured the Colonel; "the little jungle camp under the big trees, the setting sun, the darkening shadows in the tent; the earnest eyes of the dying man, his clear though excitable speech, and all his carefully repeated directions, overruling my objections, begging, appealing. Strange tale was it that was then unfolded to me; matters that concern the Gónds and no other people; weird lore that never, surely, before had been hinted of to any European.

"Finally, to still the poor sufferer, I consented. Night fell, and still the darkened tent; but Jhápoo's mind, now at rest, had begun to wander, and his mutterings had gradually glided into incoherence.

"Something had been forgotten in the *nullah*, the bed of the Kókri; that was clear; but more of it was to be had. Where? Ah! It was buried.

"'Under the doorway?'

"'Yes, under the doorway——'

"'At Nánda?'

"'Yes. Nánda Bakajhàn' (his native hamlet in the Sátpurás).

"And so the night rolled on.

"Towards morning I had fallen forward asleep, but was awakened by a movement at my side. Outside in the jungle the waking peafowl were mewing at the dawn, and the cheery notes of the grey jungle-cock rang out sharp

and clear. Old Jhápoo was sitting up on his cot; he touched my sleeve as he had touched it at many an Indian dawn.

"'See!' he whispered, pointing into the unseen. Then he raised one hand with extended fingers, and his glazing eye burned an instant.

"'Five *khandis!*' he said loudly. 'Five *khandis* of male tigers! Five . . . full . . . *khandis!*'

"Then I laid what was left of him back on the rough blanket, and called up the servants gently."

Of the Colonel's yarn there is not much more to recall. He touched lightly on the matter of the ghastly taxidermy, and the means by which he was at length enabled to have old Jhápoo's wishes carried out to the letter. Things of that sort seem to have been easier in the old days than they would be now. He described how he had arranged the details, down to the *bunniah's* chest, and the finding of the lost "something"—which turned out to be a short length of hollow bamboo filled with a curious grey ointment—and then how he had locked all up in the casket and put the latter secretly away. In the East remarkably little escapes the notice of one's native servants, who may be said to know more about their masters than the masters know about themselves, and I wondered how on earth old Mulligatawny had faced this problem.

Abdul Ghani, of course, knew. But the Colonel informed me that years afterwards, when once more the cycle of his duties brought him within reach of tiger country, the appearance of the long-closed chest always excited the liveliest horror among his retainers, although he had many times changed his servants, as is common in India on being ordered to different parts of the country.

As the old gentleman wound up his story, he rose, and placing his fingers on the head of the tiger-skin that hung on the wall above the copper-bound box, revealed a

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jagged hole which, by his express order, had been left unpatched.

That, then, was the skin of the Mánjród man-eater!

"'Five *khandis*' was the prophecy, Alastair," he concluded. "Five measures of twenty each. Over four and a half have already been accounted for. Whether you complete the total, or else hand the chest over to the native agents whose address you have, is entirely your business; but in any case you have my most earnest thanks. And now let us turn in. Good night, my dear boy. Good night."

* * * * * *

The India of the late nineties was a very different country to that of those bygone times when the "Qui-hye," or old-fashioned "Anglo-Indian," possessed the land, appearing even in the Presidency cities in his home-made duck or drill and coloured "cummerbund"; and I very soon realised what I had feared—that for me to travel with a copper-clasped *bunniah's* cash-chest was quite another matter to what it had no doubt seemed to old Colonel Mulligatawny.

The "casket" was becoming an unmitigated nuisance; and that the very moment I had again set foot on the shores of the old "Shiny."

First of all there was the worry at the Bombay Customs, through which Jhápoo, concealed for the occasion in a matrix of old wearing apparel, had passed by the skin of his teeth; for the appearance of his habitation was scarcely in keeping with that of the smart portmanteaus and travelling-trunks which littered the platforms of the Customs office.

Then there was the affair of the native thief, over whose insensible form I had tripped one evening in front of the lock-picked chest on returning to my hotel, while the sudden vision of Jhápoo squatting at home there in the

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dusk had startled even me. It was intolerable to contemplate the chance of his discovery, or of that of myself —a British officer—concealing the existence of a stuffed man among his personal effects; so it was necessary to beat that unhappy burglar into semi-consciousness and deposit him, led by devious and, I hoped, puzzling passages, in a distant part of the hotel. For the box itself I was forced to obtain a specially manufactured canvas cover.

Again, on the way up-country, the heat affected Jhápoo to such an extent that I found myself unable to bear the Eastern fragrances that were wafted through the compartment from his hiding-place, or the intolerable expression of well-bred surprise on the face of a distinguished-looking man who occupied the opposite sofa-seat; and with an uncomfortable apology for my "Indian curios," I had him removed to the guard's van. Even when I had reached my destination that infernal box exercised its fatal attractive power, for hardly had I begun to shake things down in my new quarters before my lately engaged servant was discovered rising hurriedly from its vicinity; and young Jones, bursting in one afternoon to borrow a polo-stick, had found the box open, with me bending over it, on the one and only occasion when I had bethought myself of ascertaining how Jhápoo stood the ravages of moth. Like a fool, at the sound of footsteps I too hastily slammed the lid to; and, although my visitor had not penetrated the secret, that episode gave rise to the chaff which followed me for years.

Such were a few of the disadvantages of Colonel Mulligatawny's commission, which I had accepted with so light a heart.

Finally, there came the offering—the burnt sacrifice! Returning from the Mess one night I noted the faint glimmer of a suspicious light in my bungalow, and, stealing forward, stick in hand, found my quarters pervaded

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by a most unholy smell. A small heap of hill grains, the quarter of a cocoanut, and three little marigolds lay there on the matting; while a tiny cotton wick, oil-floated in a rude earthen saucer, sent up its sooty thread of smoke and flickered on a greasy smear of red ochre that had been freshly applied to the front of the chest.

Now this was the last straw. Possessed by a spirit of idle curiosity, I had hitherto retained the chest in my hands instead of accepting the Colonel's alternative. I had a half-hearted idea that I should like to learn the sequel—if any—to that strange yarn in which—spite the touch of humorous incredulity with which he had endeavoured to cover it—the old gentleman had betrayed such undoubted belief. But this latest development was too high a price to pay for my fancy. I drew a chair to my escritoire and scribbled a note. The chest should leave to-morrow.

This done, I stepped in annoyance to the door, intending to summon my servant to remove the sacrificial offerings—the burnt part of which I had already extinguished—when it struck me that by so doing I might draw too large an amount of inquisitiveness to the object of their devotion; I therefore turned and gathered them up, looking for some place in which I might conceal them from prying eyes. Why, Jhápoo himself should safeguard them!

My keys were themselves locked away in security, but after a while I unearthed them, and quietly unlocking the resting-place of the stuffed Gónd, raised the lid.

I had put away the votive tokens of an unknown propitiator, when something in the appearance of the ghastly, stuffed figure attracted my attention. It seemed to-night as if the skin shone with a smoother lustre, as if the whole frame had been furbished up. The slight powdering of dust that I had noted of late had been removed, and the faintest touch of vermilion, just so much as might adhere

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to and be transferred by a finger-tip insufficiently rubbed clean of the greasy ochre, lay on the dead man's brow.

I turned round and looked behind me uneasily. Not a sound broke the silence of the night but the far-away howl of wandering jackals. Through the wide-open doors and windows I could see the starry sky. Hand on lid I remained arrested in deep thought awhile. Some rats galloped noisily in the ceiling-cloth above my head. Then I slowly closed it down, turned the lock, and retired.

Next morning I tore up that note.

Some eighteen months had passed away, and the means which I had devised to shield the chest—and myself—from further attentions had proved so successful that I had almost forgotten its existence. True, there had been some inexplicable occurrences following its retirement; but they had long since ceased, and, in the desultory correspondence which old Mulligatawny and I maintained, references to Jhápoo had completely lapsed.

The "hot weather" had come round again, and not being able that year to indulge in one of my usual shooting expeditions, I had obtained a few days' leave of absence, and sent out some camp kit to an old Indian fort which was situated on a solitary hill about fifty miles to the northward.

This ancient stronghold, a bold landmark, rose precipitously from the cultivated plains around, crowned by crumbling battlements of time-blackened masonry which was being slowly but surely disintegrated by the insidious and irresistible roots of the *pipal* tree—the saxifrage of India.

On the level summit a few solid old stone gateways and cloistered Hindu edifices had survived the ravages of time and the vandalism of Muhammadan conquest; and in their cool shade my modest appurtenances had been arranged with considerable comfort.

We had heard that pig were to be found in the neigh-

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bourhood, and I had promised to ascertain whether the prospects of hog-hunting were sufficiently rosy to induce some friends to join me from cantonments. Meanwhile an old "tank," or artificial lake, the water supply of the besieged garrison in the troublous times of bygone days, held some fine specimens of that almost amphibious fish the *murral;* the plains below were wandered over by many a roving herd of antelopes; and the elevation over the surrounding country, only a few hundred feet though it might be, afforded a pleasant retreat from the scorching blasts of an Indian summer.

It was my wont to leave my bed each day before dawn, and pick up my horse, which was accommodated at the foot of the old Fort hill; but, rousing later than usual one morning, I sauntered instead to the outermost walls of the decaying fortress, field-glass in hand. The lower slopes of the hill were scored with rocky ravines, and some *chinkára*—the Indian gazelle—inhabited this ground, among them being an exceptionally fine little buck. In addition to this material attraction, the view was wide and glorious.

The little hill fort was perched some five hundred feet sheer above the open plain, which stretched away, almost a dead level, to the dim blue circle of the horizon. At a distance fields, villages, groves of trees, palm brakes, and waste ground blended into an indistinct wash of purple haze that was touched here and there by the remote sheen of a great river; but closer at hand, for some fifteen miles out, the surface of the earth was etched into the neatest of maps, its topographical features displayed in every minute detail. Far to the left rose a serrated line of faintest blue—the jungly hills that were at present rather beyond the scope of my limited period of leave, and were reputed to hold a few wandering tigers—and from their direction could be traced the advancing serpentine course of a large tributary stream. Patches of thorny

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jungle concealed its deep bed at intervals. It bisected the plain, passed close—within a mile or so—and continued a southern course towards the big river.

From this main drain of the distant hills a winding watercourse detached itself and approached my eyrie, spreading out, as it diminished in size, into a number of lesser *nullahs*, these in their turn splitting into the thread-like cilia that climbed the yellow, scrub-covered hillside to their little sources under the basalt precipice at my feet. Most of the latter were dry and herbless gullies; but one of them, dropping over a toy-like lower cliff, was filled with the bright green of a matted little jungle of *karúnda* and *lantána*, the strong red blossoms of the latter plant contrasting prettily with the khaki and drab of the dry slopes around. I could see a bevy of peafowl feeding on the outskirts of this miniature jungle—an almost certain indication of some hidden spring of water. Farther down-hill the *nullah* reappeared, a deep-cut fissure smothered in rank dry grass.

It was a dead still morning; and as I sat and sipped the coffee that my servant had set on the stone parapet at my side, one could distinctly hear the far-off sounds of the villages of the plain as they awaked to another long hot day. The fields lay bare, the threshing-floors were cleared, the ryot's busy harvest-time was o'er; and now the interminable Indian marriage ceremonies were in full swing. A faint *Thum—thum—thum* of drumming came floating up through miles of calm air. Then the dull red disc of the sun looked over the horizon, and the hillside flamed a sudden orange.

The cool of an Indian summer morning is a brief and evanescent pleasure, and as the sun climbed higher I rose from my seat, with thoughts of the morning tub. As I turned I heard the alarmed "*Tok—tok—tok!*" of a peacock, and, craning over the walls, saw that the birds which had lately been so peacefully feeding were running along

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the hillside; one or two of them took flight and skimmed heavily away. Then a dark object appeared in the grass far below—a hyæna, no doubt, returning from his nocturnal rambles. Dropping my cigarette, I raised the binoculars, and put them right on to the spotted back of a panther as he disappeared in some bushes!

Half an hour later I was seated expectantly on a rock, rifle in hand; but in spite of the very limited extent of covert our little "beat" produced no panther.

Again and again every nook of that isolated patch was explored, but all to no purpose; the brute must have found some holt unknown to us or to the local villagers. He had not gone far, however, for a goat which was left there as a bait was killed and eaten during the ensuing night. Once more we searched for him, but again without success.

Next night I occupied a cunningly hidden *machán*, while a fresh bait bleated persuasively close by; but although the panther's fresh tracks showed us that he continued to haunt the hill, my efforts were unavailing.

It was at this juncture that I remembered the long-forgotten chest.

I had promised myself, with an amused smile, that its mystic powers should be tested at the earliest opportunity, and this chance was now presented. True, it was only a panther on which I should experiment, but the lesser feline might prove as susceptible to the strange influences said to emanate from Jhápoo as had been his great congener. The tally of the five *khandis* was, I understood, nearing completion, and should the extraordinary hints thrown out by old Mulligatawny possess any foundation, I fancied that I might look for relief of my responsibilities in some uncanny climax, when the patient inmate of the copper-bound casket, his vow fulfilled, would be haled away to his own particular and Góndian realms of everlasting bliss by a cachinnating cohort of nimble

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rock-and-jungle fiends. Demonology is the aborigine's strong point. I might, therefore, expect something really high-class in the apotheosis of one who had so long commanded the services of infernal agency on earth.

At any rate, I could now cherish hopes of setting old Mulligatawny's mind finally at rest and ridding myself of this absurd incubus of a magic box at one and the same moment. Jhápoo and his carapace, charged as they were with Eastern essences, must be highly inflammable. Should his Gónd devils fail to play up properly, why, a match to the dry grass in his vicinity, and——!

Circumstances lent themselves to my plans. I should simply have to tell my orderly—a new man—to fetch me a certain wooden crate, warning him to exercise that care in its transport which—let me see—ah, yes—photographic material demanded.

And so it came about that on the afternoon of the third day Jhápoo arrived.

I had been out for an evening canter over the plain, and it was in the warm red gloaming that I climbed the steep stone-paved ascent back to my quarters in the old fort. The chest had, by my orders, been removed from its packing-case and set down near the entrance to the ancient building in which I had taken up my temporary abode.

On reaching camp I called for a whisky-and-soda, and was about to drop into a comfortable chair when a slight movement in the shadow of the carved archway caught my eye. Peering forward, I made out the slight figure of an old woman crouching in the obscurity at my feet; and as I uttered an exclamation of surprise, the movement was repeated. A withered hand went slowly up in a trembling salaam, and a vacant pair of lack-lustre eyes fixed themselves on my face.

"Who is this?" I inquired of my servant who had arrived, and was pouring out my "peg." "And what does she want here? Give her a couple of annas, and see that

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she does not break her neck at the steep corner." There was a Hindu shrine among the ruins hard by, which was sometimes visited by villagers, and I supposed that the old creature had forgotten her way home.

"She does not beg, *hazúr*," was the reply, "but has been sitting there these two hours. She hearkens not to any order. "Dinner for 'the presence' is laid at some distance," he continued uncomfortably, as I caught sight of the lamp-lit table set in an old courtyard round the corner, ". . . and also the easy-chair. With aged persons how shall argument be made? If 'the presence' himself would be pleased to give an order, the ancient will doubtless obey"—and he edged uneasily away.

"How now, mother?" I said, turning once more to the wrinkled crone and exhibiting a shining rupee. "Is it a pilgrimage? See! The priest has been gone this hour and more, and thy sons await thee in the village below."

"Haste thee!" I continued, as she made no sign of comprehension. "Get thee gone with speed, for this hill is peopled of *bhoots* (ghosts), and night is nigh!"

There was a quick scuffling sound. Glancing round I saw my servant hurriedly disappear.

"Come! up with thee!" I insisted sharply, holding out the rupee to the crouching figure.

But no; she squatted there dumbly, contentedly, immovably, her filmy eyes lifted to mine in a kind of dim surprise. Again she feebly salaamed, and in the gesture seemed to answer me. It was exactly as if she had said, "I have come. I am here. What more?"

"Bah! she'll go away by herself when the spirit moves her," I muttered; and turning, strode away to doff my riding kit.

Night had fallen. Dinner was over, and my servant had served coffee and cheroots. Yet it seemed to me that he hovered about in a hesitating manner, an irritating manner, and one peculiar to orientals, who, moving so soft-

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foot noiselessly as they do, have a most exasperating habit of attracting attention by means of a hollow cough.

"What is it, then?" I growled testily.

"Be pleased to condone the fault," stammered the man, "but your honour's syce reports that the mare has dropped a shoe, and he will, having caused shoeing to be performed quickly, return from cantonments within a few days, and——"

"*What!*" I exclaimed, having looked at the mare's feet only that evening, and knowing the excuse to be false.

"—and also it has become known that in the house of your slave there is sudden great sickness, so I too——"

"*No!*" I shouted angrily, "*No!* Begone! And tell the syce that if that shoe be not present when I come with shoeing hammer and nails at morn, there shall be fining —and worse! And see!" I went on, as he slowly withdrew, "that hag—remove her!"

"She hath gone, *hazúr*," came the resigned but foreboding voice.

"What the devil ails them all?" I wondered, relighting my cheroot and picking up a book.

But I could not read long that night. It may have been the annoyance of those untimely applications for leave—foolish requests that they must have known could not be granted—or the irritatingly untruthful excuses that had been put forward in support. I pushed away the volume before me, and smoked on in silence. Away from the circle of yellow light shed by the lamp the quiet night was lit by the soft splendour of an Indian moon, under whose rays the deserted and lifeless walls of the old fort stood out grey-blue or softly black. A few sacred *champa* trees raised their bare sweet-flowering arms vaguely against the pale sky, near the distant crenelations of the outer battlements, where a nightjar was tapping out his rapid and ceaseless "*Chuckoo—chuckoo—chuckoo.*" It was a typical Indian moonlit night, and the temperature

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of the air was perfect—a combination little short of divine.

I rose and began to slowly perambulate the courtyard. It was very still, and the servants' quarters seemed to be unusually quiet. I could see the flickering glow of their cooking fires beyond dark piles of arched domes. As I passed, sauntering onwards, something shone white on the moonlit paving-stones near the entrance to my quarters. I halted. It was my rupee, lying exactly where I had tossed it in front of my unbidden visitor that evening; and behind it, dimly outlined in the dark of the archway, reposed the grotesque shape of the old chest.

My temporary irritability had passed away, and hour and surroundings alike were productive of the mood contemplative. As I stood and gazed down at the shining coin it seemed to assume fantastic shapes, to expand and swell, until I was looking into a firelit hall. Once more I heard the Atlantic's distant roar, and the soughing of the firs; again I saw the antlered walls of Alt-na-skiach and the great skin of the Mánjród man-eater, and gazed on the keen and animated face of my dear old friend as he leant forward in his chair, anxiously awaiting my acceptance of his strange trust. Scenes long forgotten took shape in the infinite picture galleries of the mind, materialised, faded. Then they all vanished once more.

But before me lay the moonlight, the coin, and—the chest. These remained.

How long I stood there I do not know. Strange fancies passed in succession through my mind; phantasmagoria into which the crouching figure of that wrinkled crone would force a way. Suddenly I raised my head with a start. It was late. I turned back thoughtfully through the moonlit courtyard, and sought the cool sheets of my bed; lay there gazing up into the starry tropic sky. After a while the cigar dropped from my relaxing fingers, and I turned on my side. Thus came sleep.

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Another Indian day came and passed, and the late afternoon found us descending the shady side of the hill once more. In front of me a coolie from the nearest village, balancing his burden on his head, stepped warily down from stone to stone of the ruinous boulder-paved path. Had he but caught a whisper as to the nature of the load which I had imposed on him, I should have had to shoulder the chest and bear it myself to the jungle below, for the story would have spread like wild-fire. It was easy to see that every man of my own retainers now possessed the secret of the dreadful box; and the only bar to its rapid dissemination lay in their own keen anxiety to avoid any kind of contact with the object of their horror. I therefore found some amusement in a contemplation of the coolie's apathetic indifference to his task, the while mentally piercing the chest's sides and obtaining an imaginary view of its grisly occupant; a comparison rendered still more piquant by the silent terror with which my servants had watched him tackle his job, in their eyes thereby dooming himself irrevocably to some ghastly fate. Behind me, dragging a bleating goat, tramped my orderly, a fine upstanding young Rájpút, a fighting-man, and one who would willingly share any position of danger into which his *sahib* might chance to find his way. His sturdy broad frame was, I thought, a trifle unnecessarily braced up, and his eye perhaps wider than usual; and from such signs I gathered his state of mind; for they said plainly: "The creatures of the jungle—what are *they?* Where the *sahib* stands, my place is by his side, and I budge not, no, not when the tiger himself doth charge, and I hand the second gun. But as for this matter of *bhoots* and goblins, this *jádoo* of a box and what not, it is quite another business, and a word of *most* ineffable badness!—*Arré báp!* (Oh! my father!)

"Yet the *sahibs*, they say, have strong and efficacious magic of their own. Albeit, then, that I close my eyes, or

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else behold not save through the doubled circlet of my sacred *jánéo* (Brahminical thread), it may so pass that this witchcraft of sorcerers shall spare me this once!"

Thus we went on our way, and in time reached our destination.

The narrow ravine in which we found ourselves was even more thickly wooded than had been apparent when viewed from above. The vegetation followed the course of its rocky bed, for about fifty yards up and down, impinging on and thrusting itself against the very walls of the low cliff, from whose foot now oozed the parent spring, and then spreading upwards to each flank, until the whole depression was enclosed in green shade. In the centre, between these strips of miniature jungle, had been formed a little dell, overhung by one or two taller trees that sprang from the lower ground and met their green tracery overhead; and this narrow fairy glade extended right through from the base of the cliff to the spot where the *nullah* ran out among longish grass and emerged into the open air.

The panther was not in the habit of lying up in this covert, though he prowled through it at night. His abode seemed to be somewhere in the recesses of hollow rocks, which lay rolled together in masses as they had fallen from other portions of the hill.

The head of the glade, as has already been hinted at, was surrounded by an amphitheatre of low cliff, so it was impossible for an animal to enter save by the mouth of the little gorge or its vicinity.

Against the cliff itself there grew a wide-branching banyan tree, and in its boughs I had already erected a platform of rough poles. It was not long ere rug, blanket, and rifle were handed up, and I found myself occupying a cleverly screened hiding-place which commanded a capital view of the ground and thicket below. The goat had been secured by a cord to a projecting root about five yards away, and the old chest—still masquerading as

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"photographic material"—lay hidden behind the leafage near the foot of my tree.

My orderly, after feigning that amount of hesitation which he considered suitable to the situation, slowly permitted the meaning of my pantomime to break in on him: and, taking the coolie with him, disappeared through the scrub. He was to proceed to a distant shoulder of the hill and there await events. And mightily relieved did he appear!

Since I had gone so far in lending countenance to this childish affair, I had determined to follow out the old Colonel's recipe to the letter. No sooner therefore were the men out of sight than I proceeded to clamber down from my perch, alighting on *terra firma* with a final drop, which had the effect of electrifying the unfortunate goat, who forthwith stood on his head and then indulged in outrageous leapings, under the impression that his last hour had arrived with even greater rapidity than he had expected.

Brushing aside the branches which screened the chest, I unlocked and raised the lid.

To my belief the mummy had been locked up for close on a year and a half, so I had expected a somewhat musty smell to accompany an airing so long deferred. But I found myself totally unprepared for the very peculiar exhalation which now assailed my nostrils. Casket and stuffed man alike were usually impregnated with more or less recognisable Eastern aromas, but this faintly subtle quintessence which overtopped them all was utterly unfamiliar to my senses and indescribably strange. Yet—had there not been just the slightest suspicion of such an odour when first I had seen the box opened that night long ago in the hall at Alt-na-skiach?—something indeterminate, and volatile, that seemed as if it possessed a power of giving off wave after wave of far-travelling scent-rays? Some emanation of this kind, indeed, seemed

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to affect me as I looked down at the weird figure that squatted, hunched up, there, like some hideous, glabrous toad; and at that moment I became aware that the smooth brown skin shone with a sticky lustre. Picking up a twig, I rubbed it against the tanned and plastic epidermis. Jhápoo had been freshly greased!

I sank on my knee and peered into the chest. There lay a short greasy length of well-worn hollow bamboo, and turning it over, I saw that its mouth was smeared with a greyish paste!

I had begun to examine it more closely when I suddenly stopped—*this* had not been in the box when last I locked it away! And—what had become of all those sacrificial objects—the grain, the cocoanut, and the other things—that I had flung into the box that night? They had gone!

I raised my head and meditatively gazed into the silent jungle. After a while my eyes fell to once more examining the figure of the dead Gónd. The lock? No! All was in perfect order—and there was but one key—and that was attached to my own bunch—which now hung at the keyhole.

Suddenly I started violently and glanced over my shoulder. Something had—Ah! the goat! He had recovered from the shock to his nervous system, and was kicking at his picket, twiddling his tail, and staring across the glade at me in quite a friendly way. His interruption brought me back to the present moment. I extracted the key, and screening the now open chest with a frond or two of creeping stuff, climbed quietly back to the *machán*. And the more I sat and thought of it all, the less I liked it.

Our side of the fort hill had long been in shadow, but the sun had not yet quite set, for I could see his last level beams slanting over the plains away between and beyond the intervening trees. The goat had begun by bleating vociferously, but he now drew such comfort from my com-

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pany that he stood there mute and reassured, now and then nibbling the grass at his feet. The light evening breeze that had been gently stirring the surrounding foliage had also died away. Somewhere in the neighbourhood a roosting peacock flapped up to his perch with a loud "*Kok—kok—kok—kok—kok!*" It was one of those soft, warm, still, tropical evenings when sunset merges imperceptibly into brilliant moonlight, and the empires of day and night meet and overlap as it were, awhile, in a common, dual rule.

Far off lay the hazy line of the plain, its superheated surface a mirage of dust; the remote howl of some village cur, or the faint sounds of homing cattle floating slowly through the yellow air. Closer at hand the heads of the trees and bushes of the little jungle patch stood out clear-cut; but the dell which they overhung was now indistinct with shadows, and soon passed on into rayless gloom. Then the last beam of the sun had gone, and, as night asserted itself, the round rising moon turned gradually from palish icy green to a burnished silver disc. A hare had slipped noiselessly out and was hopping slowly about in the dusk on the opposite side of the ravine, while bats began to wheel about the face of the cliff at my back.

A faint sound came echoing round the slopes of the dark hill. I leant forward to listen intently. After some minutes it again broke the silence. This time a little nearer. A harsh grating noise exactly like the distant, slow, rough sawing of hard wood—

"*Saw—ha; saw—ha; saw—ha; saw——*"

The panther had issued on his nightly rounds.

There is no animal more varied in its behaviour than the panther or leopard. Under identical circumstances one can seldom foretell its probable line of action. When the most perfect arrangements have been made for its outwitting, it will frequently discover the presence of danger and render all the sportsman's care unavailing; on other

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occasions it will push its way into the most obvious trap with boldness—or an utter lack of precaution. This very brute had as yet got the better of all my plans for his destruction, and it might thereby be inferred that he was one of the peculiarly wide-awake kind. It was therefore with considerable surprise that I found my goat very shortly heralding the approach of the enemy in his unmistakable way. The little creature uttered one of those caprine snorts or abrupt sneezes common to his kind, and staring fixedly down the gloomy glade, began to stamp an impatient forefoot, with sudden sharp head-bobbings of apprehension.

In a very few moments a stealthy object of an indistinct greyish hue took shape from the surrounding obscurity and seated itself, with its whitish chest making a faint luminosity against an inky background. It was about thirty yards distant—too far for the charge of slugs which is the best load for such night work—and for a long time it sat there without further movement. Screened as I was, with but a small irregular hole in my leafy shelter through which to make my observations, there was no difficulty in slowly raising the binoculars to examine the animal at closer quarters. It was a large panther, of the cattle-killing sort, that sat demurely there, and it seemed that his large green expressionless eyes were turned not on the unfortunate bait, but rather towards the foot of the tree in which I awaited his approach.

Suddenly, as I gazed hard through the lenses, the brute's outline shifted and enlarged; he was coming a little nearer!

The charge of nine large buckshot which I always used on such occasions is apt to scatter considerably at any distance over fifteen yards, and it is always better to wait until one can be certain of placing the entire charge full on the spotted coat of the treacherous cat; the best results being obtained when the slugs, fired from a rifled ball-gun,

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are grouped in a neat circle about the size of the half-opened hand. So I watched the silent approach of the panther as he walked slowly but confidently forward.

Twenty yards became fifteen, fifteen became ten. Still the brute moved gradually on. Leopards have many curious ways of seizing their prey, of perambulating it in a critical manner, of playing round it, even of bearing it down unhurt and rolling over it in an ecstasy of skittishness before the fatal clutch that puts an end to the long-drawn terror of their unwilling playmate. Yet it seemed hard that the little goat should be sacrificed any longer to a ghastly suspense. I raised my weapon slowly. The white card of the night-sight rested full on the muscular neck; the forefinger gently closed on the trigger; next instant it would swiftly contract, and—but I had never seen such curious behaviour on the part of any of my spotted friends before! The leopard had passed by the trembling bait, in fact he entirely ignored its presence, and was now heard purring gently to himself as his tail by degrees rose in air. Then he halted, glancing sidewise with lowered head, sleek, handsome, a perfect picture of feline grace and lissomness. One would almost have expected him to rub his smooth and glossy side against the nearest object; and there was a sensation as of some well-fed tabby approaching to draw her coat luxuriously across one's trouser-leg.

And then I suddenly remembered the box!

The excitement and interest of watching the movements of this wild denizen of the jungle had temporarily driven all other thoughts away, but now all at once there returned the knowledge of dead Jhápoo sitting there; and instantly there passed along my spine that strange feeling of repulsion that accompanies the uncanny realisation of something that one half believes in, but has rejected as outside the bounds of possibility. It was deathly still in that starlit, moonlit place. The long black shadows

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hemming it round were responsible for an uncomfortable sense of confinement, and an opening in the jungle let in but a narrow patch of moonlight, which illuminated the stiffened figure of the paralysed goat and disclosed the mysterious movements of our noiseless nocturnal visitor.

What might or might not have happened it is impossible to say. The panther had turned, and was apparently about to walk slowly round the foot of the tree in that extraordinary manner he had now assumed, when a scoffing and rebellious mood took possession of me. This was all humbug; and, what was more, it was preposterous that I should be expected to remain a spectator of the imbecile vagaries of a brute that had given me the slip before. Rising cautiously, I leant over; the dark sinuous back was passing a few feet below. There was an instant's pause; then a flash; and a roaring echo smote outwards from the cliff. A round tail beat the ground convulsively for a few moments; straightened out slowly and quiveringly to its black tip; and presently all was quiet.

Sounding my whistle, I awaited the return of the men, who, bringing help with them, shortly took up the limp carcase, loosed the goat, and we reached camp again not long after nine o'clock.

It was not until I was dropping off to sleep that night that I recollected the fact that I had left the chest open for the night in the jungle. It had not indeed been my intention to remove it from its present site, since I had a vague idea of getting rid of it by one or other of the plans already hinted at; but that the lid should have been left unfastened and raised had not been part of my programme. Yet I felt almost certain that the character of the contents would deter any meddling on the part of persons who might be aware of its present whereabouts. I closed my eyes, my thoughts full of the extraordinary demeanour of the wild beast that I had lately slain—its *mysterious* movements and the ignoring at such close quarters of a

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bait so irresistibly tempting to his kind. I remember, with the last eddies of consciousness, reviewing the Colonel's tale, until man-eating tigers, the scene so long ago at Mánjród, old hags, leopards, and jacks-in-boxes that unexpectedly projected withered and grinning corpses, were intermingled in the fantastic and inconsequent medley of semi-unconsciousness. Then came the dreamless sleep of those who make their bed under the open, starry sky.

"*Sahib! sahib!*" came the low mournful call by which we exiles in the East are accustomed to be daily aroused by our patient attendants. It was early morning and almost cold. The morning star was high, and already dawn reddened the east. My orderly stood at a distance, passing a rag with the air of an artist over my well-kept rifle. He approached at a signal.

"There are tigers!" was his laconic remark.

"Tigers! Where?" I grunted under the blanket.

"In the jungle."

"Without doubt!" I returned, with luxurious half-closed eyes. "It is their habit to remain in such places, oh excellent one!"

"Without doubt, *sahib*," came the grave response; "but they are here—here in the jungle where your honour sat last night."

"That is well, oh Rámréka! Do thou go, then, and tell them to approach yet a little closer!" And I turned on my side with a lazy smile, while a short silence ensued.

"In your honour's hearing came there no sounds during the time of night?"

"None, oh brave one. None save that of a great owl that sat awhile under the moon and cried, 'Come, Rámréka! Come!'"

"Nay, *sahib!* But of a truth and no jest did I and all your servants hear numerous tigers calling below this hill at the first cockcrow. As also the voice of one that drove them away, as it were, with screamings and abuse,"

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he added in a low tone; "and we, going together in a body to the edge of the walls, did note the sounds rise clean to the hearing, and the voice—the voice of the Góndni——"

"Góndni?" I snapped out, now wide awake. "What Góndni?" and as suddenly—before he could reply—I *knew! That* old woman! the hag! the unbidden visitor of two nights since. Also Jhápoo; and the chest!——

"By the time of the drinking of your honour's coffee the beaters shall be ready below!"—and the heavy boots of my trusty man retreated briskly from the flagged courtyard.

* * * * * *

To shoot two full-grown tigers right and left in a mere patch of scrub thirty miles from the nearest heavy jungle; to see them lying sprawled out dead there before me, the soles of their pads abraded by much fast travelling; to marvel at the dazed fashion in which one had aimlessly climbed the bare hillside, while the other, immediately afterwards, and with equal imbecility, had endeavoured to break away over the bare plains—all was inexplicable and *wrong!* None of the usual rejoicings seemed now to be taking place; the figures of men moved as automatons as in a dream. To complete all, I had just returned from the covert which I had then entered alone, to find the little jungle utterly deserted, but a mass of tigers' pugs, and Jhápoo's travelling sarcophagus *closed and locked!*

Then it was that the strange spirit of this strange quest at last entered into me—much as I had learnt it had possessed my predecessor in the ownership of this extraordinary box, but perchance in a different manner. A very lust for slaying tigers set in—an elevation of the material and mental faculties in the conviction that success in the pursuit of these usually elusive animals was now so completely at my command. All seemed as clear as day The ancient crone and her mission, the hitherto mysterious qualities of the stuffed man, the air of the occult and

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unearthly with which "medicine-men" all the world over are wont to shroud the so-called "secrets" of Nature, which, in death as well as in life, the cunning old Gónd had employed to earn himself a lasting notoriety—all now became patent, unfolded, transparent. I had penetrated a secret of the jungle tribes, the mysterious "talisman" of the Gónds was mine, the hidden spring of their success as hunters of the great carnivores. That was all!

But I should keep the knowledge to myself. And how I should amuse myself with it! What a puzzle in the tiger-shooting line should it afford my perplexed and despairing friends! Old Jhápoo and his narrow abode should now indeed disappear—and that right early, the old humbug; there should be no more absurd journeyings to and fro of a mystic chest, no special séances for the benefit of old women; but the germ of fatal attraction contained in that bamboo phial, the grey paste—that should remain, handy, compact, a faithful servant.

Plunging a hand in my pocket, I jingled my bunch of keys and a box of matches. The tigers were being removed to the shade of a tree by a chattering crowd, and the village *chamárs* had already arrived with their skinning knives.

I slipped into the patch of jungle once more, reached my destination, stooped, unlocked, and raised the lid.

Jhápoo as of yore, evil-smelling, greasy, glabrous—but the bamboo tube—vanished!

And now for the first time I became aware that the inner surface of the cover was scored with a number of deep scratches disposed in rude lines, and ranging in periods from old to comparatively recent. The last two had been but freshly marked. I idly counted the total.

The tally of the five "khandis" was all but complete!

Since all guesswork had now been swept away and enlightenment had come as to the foundation of this jungle "mumbo-jumbo," it was plain enough that a crisis was

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at hand, and that Jhápoo's senile attendant—his wife, or his daughter it might be, perchance—would surely see to it that the contents of the bamboo receptacle were disposed to the best effect on this final occasion. That she would employ its unctuous virtues freely was fairly certain, and that it would then be left awhile in the mummy's coffer seemed equally unavoidable, since its presence in an unprepared position during the hours of night might be provocative of disaster.

Somehow or other I felt certain that the old Góndni would endeavour to make sure work of Jhápoo's apotheosis, of the finishing touch to the deception so long and successfully carried on, so it was with small surprise that I turned a corner of the steep path on my homeward way to find a crouching figure squatted in the shade of the outer gateway of the fort. As I approached it was as easy to note the gleam in those cunningly dulled eyes as to supply a reason for so wrinkled a dame braving the scorching glare of the Indian summer day; and, as I would have passed by in seeming unconcern, a sound like the creaking of a rust-bound hinge vibrated on my ear and brought me to a halt.

"Why all this *tamásha* (ceremony) and beatings of the jungle by day?" it said. "Will not the *sahib* do according to his wont—as in the old time?" Then, as if anticipating my intention, almost the very words that formed themselves on my tongue, she continued—

"See! tigers shall be present, *sahib*, this very night, and without fail! They shall assuredly come. Behold! I see them approach the *machán*."

And then, worked up to a kind of senile frenzy as the hag seemed to be, the cracked voice suddenly ceased; shrewd cunning displaced the temporary excitement, and with a film of vacuity overspreading the sunken eyes, a withered hand went up in a slow salaam. . . .

Evening had fallen—still, warm, unusually cloudy, without a breath of air; and night, succeeding the short tropical

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twilight, had swept up swiftly from the east, to reveal a low-hanging, coppery moon, barred across by parallel bands of dark and motionless vapour. Before me the same lonely nocturne as presented twenty-four hours previously —the dim glade, the overhanging trees, the silence, and the faint odour of moisture—dank, unmistakable in this dry and heated air of the hot season—that emanated from that trickle of water oozing from the cliff so near—the sustenance of every creature that haunted this little dell. Last night's leafy bower—long since withered and harshly crackling—had been removed, and a fresh screen of newly-gathered green leaves and branches surrounded the *machán*, increasing the sense of heat and oppression. Coat and boots were already discarded, the water-bottle hung close at hand from a convenient bough, and in the absolute calm of the atmosphere, safe from even a breath that might waft its warning to the surrounding jungle, the smoke of my cigar rose slowly in a vertical column through the branches overhead.

All was well. Jhápoo lurked hungrily at his post below, and the bamboo tube reposed at his side. I had, it is true, thought of abstracting it there and then, and had even taken it up gingerly 'twixt finger and thumb; but on second thoughts, and for a variety of reasons, it had been replaced—till morning. I recollect that at that moment there had risen a slight sibilant sound in the shadowy undergrowth close by—a kind of sigh—it may have been the stirring of a snake winding its scales across the dried twigs.

And now, with settled patience, came quiet reflection. Wherever they might have come from last night, those tigers had apparently not arrived on the scene until the small hours of morning—at which time the uncanny disturbances reported by my servants had aroused the camp. When, therefore, would Jhápoo's victim or victims arrive this night? In such fashion I found myself fancifully

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picturing their journey. Did they arrive from some unknown concealed covert in the neighbourhood, or—yet how was it possible for them to travel in a few hours from those distant hills?

Since I had penetrated the secret of Jhápoo, it was hardly to be expected that my present vigil would be so full of surprises or of the unexpected as its predecessor; yet, as I sat on silently in that deserted place, a portion of the uncomfortable sensations induced by the extraordinary character of the stuffed man and his uncanny appurtenances gradually forced their return. Solitude in lonely places by night usually succeeds in arousing, even be it faintly, a sense of the elemental in our composition. The primitive in us is temporarily revived, the artificial retires, and we find ourselves less proof against the deeply seated though hidden acknowledgment of the supernatural.

The motionless reclining of the body in a relaxed posture had to some extent relieved the feeling of overpowering heat. A gentle stirring of the air had set up a slight cooling of the temperature. And after a lapse of some hours it became more difficult to combat the sleepiness that was insidiously obtaining possession of me. Sliding gradually into a more recumbent position, I had slipped my folded hands behind my head—and thus I must have passed from drowsy consciousness to a light doze, which, broken at first by temporary wakings to listen awhile, no doubt merged gradually into sounder sleep. . . .

What was that?

For an instant the brain roused instantly from slumber finds a difficulty in locating itself and things in general—then I am wondering what loud sound it was that had caused so sudden an upspringing. Could it have been the crash of thunder?—and yet—a grating scream seemed to linger ringing in my ear. The whole sky was now littered with thick fat clouds that came sailing ponderously together to a rendezvous close above the old fort hill, and the

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scattered patter of a few warm raindrops could be heard in the surrounding leaves. The moon, now more than three-fourths of her way across the night sky, was obscured, but her refracted rays shed a ghostly half-light over all. The night had become most oppressive, my brow ached dully with the electric tension with which the atmosphere seemed charged, and the sweat was pouring off me in streams.

I was listening intently now, sitting bolt upright in my narrow hiding-place; and it seemed that there was a stealthy crepitation in the jungle about thirty yards in front of my post. Straining my eyes in this direction, they suddenly became aware of a dim shape creeping slowly nearer—but much closer in than the sounds had led me to believe. My heart suddenly thumped heavily with anticipation, and my hand went gently out and seized the rifle.

Above and beyond the dusky hill at my back the clouds had compressed into an ominous inky mass; and as I glanced up at them there came a blinding zigzag flash. Hardly had its resultant echoes rolled sonorously through the masses of piled cloud when the rain could be heard descending in a dense column, after the manner of the sudden local storms that sometimes break the monotony of the set-fair hot-weather season. The roaring rush of its heavy fall could be heard swiftly approaching, and a puff of hot wind, driven before it, swept groaning through the uneasy trees. Shortly there blazed out another violet coruscation, vividly illuminating the sombre earth and simultaneously accompanied by one of those terrific crackling detonations as of a hundred thunderbolts being forged on piles of Cyclopean anvils. The lightning passed, leaving a sensation of pitchy dark; but on the retina, indelibly photographed by that flash, lay a clear-cut picture—a huge tiger arrested in his stealthy approach, head down, glaring hard towards the foot of my tree;

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while behind him crept intently another lithe, but smaller striped form.

Blinking dazed eyes, I glanced hopelessly up at the dark sky. The clouds, torn apart by their late discharges, were trailing quickly away. Between their scudding masses appeared for a moment a tiny break; and suddenly the rim of the moon appeared swimming through the curtain of grey mist that shrouded the edge of this rapidly closing aperture.

Starting hurriedly to my feet, I leant over the rail of the *machán*, rifle to shoulder. Next moment a patch of wan moonlight slid over the glade, momentarily throwing up a great distinct form standing now directly underneath me. Instantly there was a *flash—bang!* one deep and stricken grunt, and something galloped heavily away, crashing blindly at random through the thorny underwood.

Hardly had the shot been fired ere that gleam of moon was gone, but not so quickly as to prevent a glimpse of another long, low shape that darted swiftly in under my platform, with a coughing grunt of furious rage, and in a moment there followed the savage sound of a tiger worrying an adversary, mingled with thin shrieks, curses, and the whack of feeble blows!

Aghast for a moment at these extraordinary developments, I pulled myself together and discharged the left barrel of my rifle into the air, reloaded hurriedly, and fired similarly twice again, raising a loud, deterrent shout meanwhile. Next instant there came a wrenching and a crackling as of parchment, and the creature bounded lightly off and away, followed by tottering footsteps through the dried leaves and a despairing scream of "*Hut! Hut! Chóro! chóro!*" ("Drop it! drop it!") that retreated down the glade—"*Chóro! chóro!*"—until cut suddenly off by the hiss of the dust-storm that now came swooping down with such a torrent of tropical rain as put an immediate stop to my hurried preparations for pursuit and succour. Snatch-

ing up blanket and waterproof rug, I hugged my rifle close, and cowered under the fury of the elements that swept in a deluge over me, soaking and rocking my slender perch to and fro in the groaning branches, blowing bodily away the screen of leaves and boughs, and loosening the bark lashings to such an extent that the entire structure seemed on the verge of destruction. Presently, however, the raging wind and rain began to slacken, and in a few minutes more it suddenly ceased. A wrack of dirty cloud spun whirling off, and revealed a clear, star-studded sky, with the moon just dipping behind the loom of the tall fort above. The calm air—now cool, damp, and refreshed—resounded with slow, perpendicular drippings from the neighbouring jungle. And, as I threw off my sodden coverings and stood up in the dismantled *machán*, a delicate sheen in the remote east heralded the approach of day.

And so the tale of Jhápoo's long-deferred revenge finds its close. With the destruction of this last victim to complete his fatal tally of the five *khandis*—for a fine tiger lay dead that morning among the prickly bushes that had checked its spasmodic death-gallop—the old Gónd had effected his exit in a manner no doubt as fitting and as soothing to his self-esteem as had been his long-imposed reign of terror over the unfortunate feline race. The rain had washed out every vestige of the night's wild doings; no amount of careful search on our part sufficed to shed a light on the disappearance of the mysterious paste, the Góndni, or the tigress that had been apparently responsible for that startling conclusion; and the sole tangible remainder was an empty *bunniah's* chest, overturned, claw-marked, splintered, and containing nothing but two strands of twisted iron wire that had so long retained in position the tibia of a stuffed Gónd.

Whether the ancient lady, his companion, was killed by an indignant tigress which then disposed of the mummy

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of her tormentor at leisure, or whether the wild beast had, after all, been forced to "drop it" and permit Mrs. Jhápoo to attempt the transportation of her long-defunct spouse to his native Bakajhán, such matters are without the pale of knowledge—but within the confines of conjecture. For there still obtains a dreadful superstition among the inhabitants of the riverine villages of those tracts, to a few of whom, one grey morning after an unprecedented fall of rain during the ensuing monsoon season, was vouchsafed the unspeakable spectacle of a glassy-eyed horror—the rain-bleached mother-naked figure of a man, that, squatted cork-high on the swirling flood, and blown skimming feather-light hither and thither over its tawny surface—one hand raised as if to compel attention, the other depending slack-wristed after the fashion of the restful dusky peoples—passed hurrying onwards to the great and distant sea.

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ROUND THE CAMP FIRE

THE fire-undermined logs suddenly fall together, sending a plume of yellow sparks flying upward against the black night sky. We wrap our cloaks more tightly, and draw up chairs to the blaze, spreading appreciative hands towards the attractive light and warmth.

Behind us stand the white tents, in whose comfortable shelter a good dinner has set us at peace with all the world. Further off, the small fires over which our attendants are preparing their evening meal throw a flickering light on the motley equipage of an Indian camp; while above our heads hang the dark hollows of the huge ancient mango trees of M——. Once more have we pitched camp at the old place.

Our last visit was paid during the fiery month of May, and a very different place was M—— then. But now it is Christmas week, and one revels in the perfect weather of the winter months in Central India.

Hark! There is the sharp whistle of pinions, as a company of duck wings its swift path through the cold still air, high over the camp. The well-known sound of the pintails conjures up pleasant anticipations of sport to come, with duck and snipe, in the familiar old localities. Over beyond the fire there, in the darkness, lies the dim line of the jungle's edge—a small piece of forest reserve, where, in the good old days, it was no great feat to bag

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a Christmas tiger, in addition to as many spotted deer as might be required.

Very peacefully quiet is the scene in this cricket-trilling silence of the Indian night, broken at intervals by the distant howling of jackals and the occasional bark of a dog in the neighbouring village. It is round the camp fire, gazing into the glowing embers over a steaming [illegible] of grog, pipe in mouth, that a thawing process prom the discussion of subjects interesting to the sportsman.

In referring to the past, frequent use is made of the phrase "good old days," as if those were necessarily better times than what we have to put up with now; for it is natural enough to invest past pleasures with a halo of exaggeration, of glory such as may not be achieved in these degenerate days. In some sense this glorification of the past is quite misplaced, and only due to the human tendency to paint past pleasures in none but glowing colours, while regarding the present through dull-tinted glasses; but as a rule this tendency has something tangible behind it, and, in reference to big-game shooting in India, alas! only too clear a justification. There do yet remain some localities which, by reason of their seclusion, difficulty of working, or from their being overlooked by sportsmen, have depreciated only to a small degree; but, as regards the majority of hunting-grounds in this country, the cry of "Ichabod!" is only too well founded.

For many years the diminution of Indian game has been a subject for remark, and although in some parts of the country efforts have been made to secure the remnant from extermination, and by means of preservation bring the head of game back to something like its former abundance, the greater portion of the country is still being rapidly depleted of its fauna, especially those of the more coveted species; for precautionary measures have as yet been only local, and India generally lacks such laws as would have a really widespread result.

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Before proceeding further it would be well to consider the causes to which may be attributed this deplorable toll which is being taken of wild life throughout India.

To begin with man, the most formidable of the enemies that wild animals have to fear, we find two different types of hunters in the country.

Firstly, there is the British sportsman—a class which, owing to various reasons, seems at least as numerous as ever, if not more so than before, owing to the larger number of Englishmen now resident in or visiting the country. And of him there are varieties.

Taken in the best sense of the word, the British sportsman, while to a certain extent contributing to the inroads made on wild animals, has apparently little real effect on their numbers. He shoots fairly, and the unwritten laws that regulate his behaviour generally prevent him from taking unfair advantage of game, or affecting its existence by killing females and young of the harmless species.

Unfortunately there are exceptions to this rule; and men are to be found who, from no youthful excess of ardour, nor indiscretion born of inexperience, can hardly be persuaded to spare when anything living comes within range of their weapons.

At the same time it is believed that unsportsmanlike habits are on the wane.

A particularly harmful period was that about twenty years ago, when the "Express" rifle, then in its infancy, suddenly enabled men to inflict far greater loss on wild animals than they had been capable of carrying out with the less accurate weapons of a former day. It is well known that a great deal of unsportsmanlike shooting—mere slaughter, indeed—was indulged in then, and up to fairly recent times. The writer is acquainted with a case where two officials of the old school spread destruction abroad in their own district for many years, with dire effect on the game, especially bison and sámbar, many

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hundreds of the latter being shot without distinction as to sex or age.

Such practices, however, have more light let in on them nowadays, so we find in consequence that little havoc of this sort is played with game in the present time.

In the vicinity of colonies of an inferior class of Indo-European, we find a considerable amount of promiscuous and harmful shooting indulged in; but it is seldom that these depredations extend further than antelope, pig, etc., for it is difficult for people of this kidney to get into forests to any large extent, or wander far from the railway.

It should be remembered that the question of game-destruction at present under discussion is that of India generally, and is not intended to apply to any more or less confined and favoured parts—such as Kashmir—where until a recent date the European sportsman has indeed been a recognisable factor in the diminution of game.

Taking the country as a whole, and speaking generally, therefore, it appears to be a well-based assumption that the British sportsman—so few in comparison with the wide stretches of game-producing country—is not to an appreciable extent to blame for the marked falling off in the numbers of its fauna.

On the other hand, in whichever direction we turn, and however we regard the question, there is abundant evidence that the root of the evil lies in the depredations of native *shikáris*—trappers, snarers, and shooters, but especially shooters. For when we come to sift the means of destruction in the hands of natives, it will be found that trapping, snaring, and the use of bows, arrows, and other rude weapons have existed from time immemorial, whereas the period from which one can place a finger on the marked diminution of game dates from the time when serviceable guns became cheap and easy of purchase by native *shikáris*.

It is they who are the men on the spot. Their numbers

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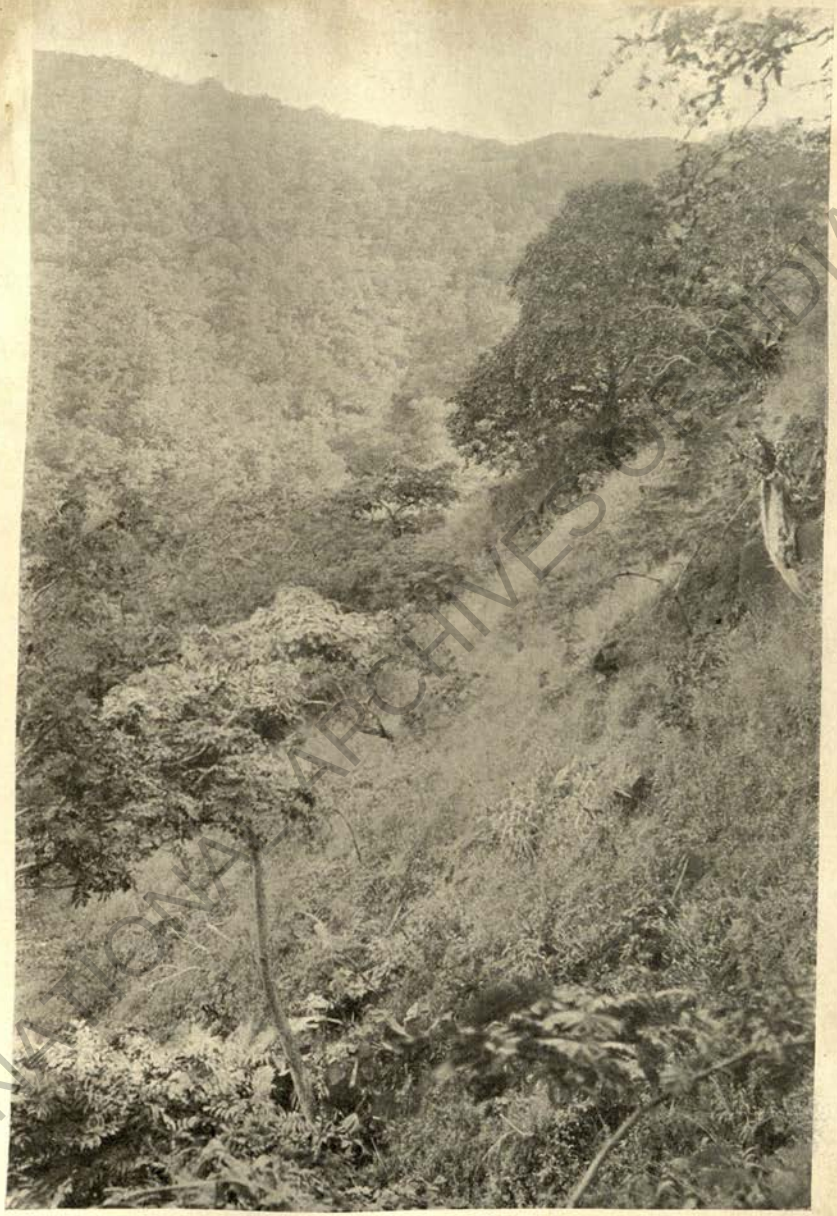

IN THE HILLS—RAINY SEASON

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vastly exceed those of sportsmen; and although in a given space of time one native *shikári* may kill less than a single Englishman who is out on a shooting excursion, yet the toll taken by the former is a never-ceasing toll. Day in, day out, through all seasons, and from year to year, his hand stays not, and it attacks the fountain-head of animal life—females, immature, and young.

To quote figures obtained from a fairly typical district with which the writer is acquainted, which is more than half of it hill jungle of a wild character, but where the ways of the native *shikári* are liable to be more keenly watched than in most localities, it is found from an examination of the returns of Government awards paid for wild animals killed during a period of several years that, whereas 14 tigers, 9 panthers, and 11 bears were killed by sportsmen, 31 tigers, 52 panthers, and 42 bears were accounted for by the native. And this in a portion of country which is fairly regularly and constantly hunted by British sportsmen.

When, in addition, we are able to estimate native character, we have not far to go to find that, for each one of such dangerous animals slain, a very large number of deer and other harmless creatures must be made away with. The native gunner has a remarkably keen eye to the main chance; and the immediate prospect of what he will gather in on the spot, by the sale of flesh, horns and hides, is far more alluring than that of the problematically few rupees that may filter down to him through the numerous native myrmidons and bloodsuckers that hedge about the offices to which he must repair to draw the Government award for the destruction of dangerous animals.

Another and very clear proof of the truth of these assertions lies in the well-known fact that during the period immediately following the Indian Mutiny of 1857, when the native gun retired into a remarkably strict condition of

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pardah, game of all descriptions increased to an extraordinary extent.

To enter on a discussion of the classes of natives most to blame would be too lengthy a matter here; but it is fairly certain that, after the village *shikáris*, policemen and forest guards are to a large extent guilty parties. In any scheme to restrict guns, therefore, due consideration should be given to the supervision of these worthies.

In addition to the distressing state of affairs consequent on these depredations,—which are, after all, only natural to the untutored and irresponsible native,—there have been noticed a few cases of organised destruction of game, so thinly disguised that one wonders how it has been left to mere sportsmen visitors to discover their existence—a reflection which is, to put it very mildly, the reverse of complimentary to the district officials, who ought to have known of and taken measures to repress them.

Some years ago it was the lot of the writer to discover an agency for the wholesale slaughter of big game in a certain district.

After tracing it so far as he was able, he brought it to the notice of sportsmen, through the medium of the then leading sporting newspaper on the Calcutta side, as follows:—

EXTERMINATION OF INDIAN GAME.

Yet another appeal to sportsmen to be merciful, and refrain from slaughter, in a leading article, entitled "The Extermination of Wild Life," printed in the —— of September 18th, and an appeal that is no doubt a necessary one. Only in the last batch of English newspapers I notice in the columns of *Black and White* the reproduction of a photograph, accompanied by an effusion from "A Sportsman," who brags of having *in nine years* killed *eight thousand* head of Indian and Burmese game!

At the same time there are other forces at work, steadily

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diminishing the game of our Indian plains and forests. The British sportsman is not so entirely to blame as one might be led to think by the number of complaints and hints of butchery laid at his door. In the hope, therefore, that attention may be drawn to the existence of a destructive agency, the effects of which are far deeper and more searching than those of any white man's *shikár*, I shall endeavour to arouse the interest of sportsmen in this direction.

If only some concerted and combined action could be arranged, it might be possible to bring some influence to bear in the proper quarter, so that preventive measures might be taken, as will be suggested hereafter.

Lately I had the pleasure of contributing to the —— an account of a two-months' shooting expedition undertaken this year in a very remote and wild part of peninsular India. In that article I touched on the reasons adduced to account for an enormous diminution of the game of those tracts—a diminution that has taken place within the past thirty years only, which is certainly not due to the British sportsmen, of whom very few ever visit that country. I described the numbers of rotting bison heads to be found in almost every hamlet, the numbers of local native *shikáris*, and the bands of ruffians that cross over into "Márdián" from the neighbouring Native State and from British territory. I noted the presence, on his regular beats, of the horn-merchant.

In the Western Ghâts, in Southern India, in the Deccan, and in Central India, I have noted the ever-present native *shikári;* and in all cases it has been the same old tale of the indefatigable destruction of game of both sexes and of all ages—patient, unremitting toll, taken day and night, week in and week out, month after month, and year after year.

What wonder then that we are beginning to note the failing numbers of the denizens of plain and jungle! Even

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the most favoured or jealously preserved ground, yet bearing a goodly stock of game, is bound to suffer in time from the steady drain going on all around.

Very lately I came across a case of organised destruction of game, so astounding in its simplicity, so terribly effective in its action, that it hastened the carrying out of the intention I have had for a long time past to bring up this subject of native *shikáris*.

At the end of last August I visited a range of hills said to hold a fair number of bison. The time was not altogether auspicious; but I was tired of vegetating in my bungalow, and determined to chance the heavy rains and wet that was certain to be my portion. I had never bagged a really good bison, out of three shot in ten years, and was anxious to secure a head that would take a place of honour on my walls beside good specimens of other Indian game. These hills lie close to the River Tapti. They are somewhat remote, and seldom visited by the British sportsman.

A journey of sixty-five miles over jungle tracks, and a very difficult crossing of the Tapti, which was running down after a heavy flood, took me to the ground I had determined to work.

I pitched camp on a knoll overlooking a small Korku hamlet, and sent for the local *shikáris*. There were bison on the higher hills, they said, but they were much scattered now. "Oh, *sahib!*" said one of them, "if you had only been here in the hot weather, you could have shot *khandis* of them down there!" and he indicated a little valley, now green with long swathes of jungle grass. "There was the only water in all the countryside, and in the early morning one could count the bison like kine—by tens and by dozens!"

"How many did you shoot?" I inquired.

A cunning look stole over his face as he looked at me sharply, but I was nonchalantly lighting a cheroot, and wore an innocent look. "Oh, two or three," he allowed;

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"but others shot more, and a tame buffalo died in the pool, so when the *ban hélas* drank there, they died too!"

"But they mostly died by eating bullets?" I suggested; and the old man acquiesced, with a sickly smile.

I worked those hills as best I could, but never came on a single mark of bison, and on very few of other game. Three four-horned antelope were all I saw during the week I was out. And now comes the gist of my tale.

I employed two *shikáris*. The old man I had already conversed with I sent off to look for tracks in one direction, while I and the other, a younger man, used to proceed in another, over the hills.

I had seated myself for a rest on a fallen tree, and asked the *shikári* what was done with any heads he might "pick up."

"Oh, we take them to 'Ishnaag!'" was the reply. "He lives in H——."

Now there was a village of this name not five miles away on the banks of the Tapti, and I had not quite caught the name. "What? That village over there?" I asked.

"Oh, no; not *that* H——! Ishnaag lives at H——, twenty-five *kós* in that direction," and he pointed north.

"Ishnaag?" I said to myself—"Ishnaag?" and then, suddenly, a light broke in on me. I had it! This "Ishnaag" was a taxidermist of whom I had heard, and I remembered his address *was* H——.

That *shikári* was a most ingenuous individual. I was certainly cautious in my method of "pumping" him, and did it little by little, not all at one time, and not evincing very great interest in his replies. He told me all with a delicious candour, and, as I could see absolutely no reason to doubt his assertions, I have no doubts at all of the truth of his disclosures. The pith of our conversation was as follows:—

"What does Ishnaag allow you for the various heads and skins you take to him?"

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"For a bison's head Rs. 15; for a sámbar's head Rs. 5; and if it is *khúb zabbar*, a real big one, then perhaps Rs. 7. For a chital head I get less. For a tiger's skin Ishnaag gives Rs. 50, and for a panther's skin Rs. 15. A bear's skin fetches Rs. 4. For a sámbar's skin, male or female, we get from Rs. 5 to Rs. 7.

"How did you get to know of Ishnaag? He lives a long way off," I asked.

"Oh, we get our powder at H——! Besides this, long ago, a messenger came from Ishnaag to all the *shikáris* round about, and told them the prices that would be given. Everyone knows Ishnaag. He is our mother and father! He is very kind to us. No trouble about payments, and no bribes to be given, as when one is foolish enough to take a tiger or panther skin to the *Saddar* for payment of the Government reward. Ishnaag says nothing, and asks no questions; only says, 'Bring more soon' and 'Here is your powder and bullets. I have deducted their price from the value of your heads and skins.'"

"And are there many *shikáris* that go to H——?"

"Plenty of them, *sahib!* All the villages near the *bandi* have *shikáris* of their own, and, besides these jungles, there are good jungles for *shikár* all up there (pointing north). I have met the *shikáris* of those parts at Ishnaag's."

"But the bison remain in the *bandi?*" I suggested, "also most of the other game."

"Oh, that is nothing!" quoth this artless child of the forest, "that is nothing! All one has to do is to give something to the *Jamadár sahib* and to the forester; one rupee or two rupees, or a sámbar's *charsa* (skin), and nobody says anything. Look! It was down there in that valley last year I shot a splendid *héla* (bison). I waited for him coming from the water, and killed him with one bullet. Yes, he ran a few hundred yards, and then I had to shoot him again to make sure. I shoot twelve, fifteen big animals every year. But up north there, a man called

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'Lallu' shoots sometimes twenty-five or thirty. He has got a splendid gun, and he never misses!"

On the last day of the expedition I got a severe attack of jungle fever, and the exertion of riding thirty-two miles and driving twenty-seven more, while under its thrall, aggravated it and brought on a bad attack of dysentery, which until lately prevented me from carrying out my intention of disclosing this terribly destructive system of collecting "sporting trophies" elaborated by "Ishnaag."

I wrote to Ishnaag the other day asking him whether he had any sporting trophies of bison, sámbar, chítal, tiger, panther, and bear; and, if so, what were the prices thereof, "well stuffed and set up."

His reply, just received, runs thus:—

"We have the following at present:—

	Rs.
One tiger-skin	300
One „ „	200
One black bear	80
One panther	110
One „	100
One „	98
One „	85
One sámbar head (33 inches) . . .	80
One „ „ (35 inches) . . .	75
One „ „ (30½ inches) . . .	65
One „ „ in velvet (29 inches) . .	60"

Ishnaag, by the way, also writes that he has "some very good specimens of *Boers'* heads" at Rs. 40 to Rs. 50—which proves that war is war after all, in spite of England's pacific policy in South Africa!

Ishnaag thus appears to make a very fair thing out of his connection with the local *shikáris*. Perhaps it would not be going too far to say that the influence of Ishnaag is felt for a radius of at least fifty miles. As the game within that radius diminishes and disappears, his influence will

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be felt still farther afield. I cannot say for certain, but there are probably more trophy-collecting agencies like that of Ishnaag in other parts of India. The devastation caused by the marketable value thus placed on heads and skins must be enormous.

I am afraid that some forest officers will be quite angry with me when I state that, in my opinion, all the laws and regulations they may make, and all the precautions they may take, short of stationing an English gamekeeper at every forest post (and picking their gamekeeper!), will never entirely prevent poaching in reserved forests by the native *shikári*. It is the gun trade that is at the bottom of all the trouble. Confiscate guns and put a prohibitive tax on powder and caps—especially on caps, for native gunpowder is easily produced locally—and the root of the trouble will be touched.

Except in certain localities, where special indulgence might be accorded, cultivators do not suffer much from the depredations of forest game. If the game of India is to be preserved from certain eventual extinction, guns must be taken away and licences given only in very exceptional cases. The illegal possession of a gun, especially on the confines of a reserved forest, should be made a very grave offence, and one involving severe punishment. Many of the guns I have seen in the possession of native *shikáris* have been uncommonly serviceable weapons (muzzle-loaders on the percussion system), and accurate up to two and three hundred yards—very nasty weapons indeed behind a mud wall. The question of suppressing guns is no doubt a difficult one. The Native State of Hyderabad in the Deccan is simply full of guns; and it is from Hyderabad that guns are sold and distributed throughout neighbouring tracts. Something might be done, however, by getting a tight hold of the trade in percussion caps. All the caps that one sees are imported; and lack of caps means many muskets rendered useless, and so many wild animals saved.

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In conclusion might I suggest that the editor of the —— would earn the lasting gratitude of all sportsmen by organising among them some concerted movement by which the question may be tackled in the best method? Exhortations to sportsmen are all very well in their way, and in some cases no doubt highly necessary; but they alone, even if we all abjured sport in consequence, could and would have little effect.

Sportsmen are certainly more merciful nowadays.

I know of many cases in the old days, even as late as ten to fifteen years ago, when hind sámbar were invariably shot if they turned up in the beat.

Sir Samuel Baker in his younger days has described the killing of a good many hinds. Forsyth, in his *Highlands of Central India*, shoots hinds more than once, to say the least of it,—and not by mistake either.

I honestly do not think that the sportsman of to-day is at the bottom of the diminution of Indian game, nor that he requires (save in exceptional cases) so many exhortations to show mercy. The native *shikári*, edged on by "Ishnaagses" and the horn-merchant, and, deeper down still, the prevalence of so many guns, are to blame, and should be taken in hand ere it is too late.

* * * * * *

Not long after the publication of the above came the following interesting letter:—

"SIR,—With reference to the article which appeared in your issue of the 16th October, regarding the extermination of Indian game, I should like to inform you that while in Bombay the other day I called on a certain co-operative society to make inquiries about the stuffed heads of Indian game exposed for sale on their walls.

"I was informed that there is a considerable demand for such trophies among 'globe-trotters' *and others*, who

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like to carry away little mementoes of the 'fine sport they have enjoyed in this country.'

"On inquiry I discovered that the self-same 'Ishnaag' referred to in that article furnishes most of these sporting trophies.

"I inquired the price of one fairly good sámbar head—execrably set up by the way, and a mere caricature of poor old *Cervus unicolor*—and was informed that it was Rs. 250.

"Kindly compare the following:—

	Rs.
Native *shikári's* price for above head . .	6
Ishnaag's price.	100
Co-operative society's price . . .	250

"Now, if this sort of trophy-collecting is to continue unchecked, why should not I and other sportsmen enter the arena in competition, shoot all the undersized game we come across, stuff the heads ourselves (I'll turn out a better sámbar than Ishnaag any day), and sell direct to globe-trotters *and others?*

"Commercially considered, this would be a profession far superior to those in which many of us are at present engaged."

* * * * * *

The result of these disclosures was at first very gratifying. Complaints of a similar nature, and letters discussing the destruction of game, poured in from sportsmen in all parts of India; numerous preventive measures were mooted; and, later, a notice was circulated, inviting sportsmen to give their views on the following lines:—

(1) General observations on the destruction of game.
(2) Any information you may have—precise or approximate estimates—any instances you can give thereof.
(3) The cause.

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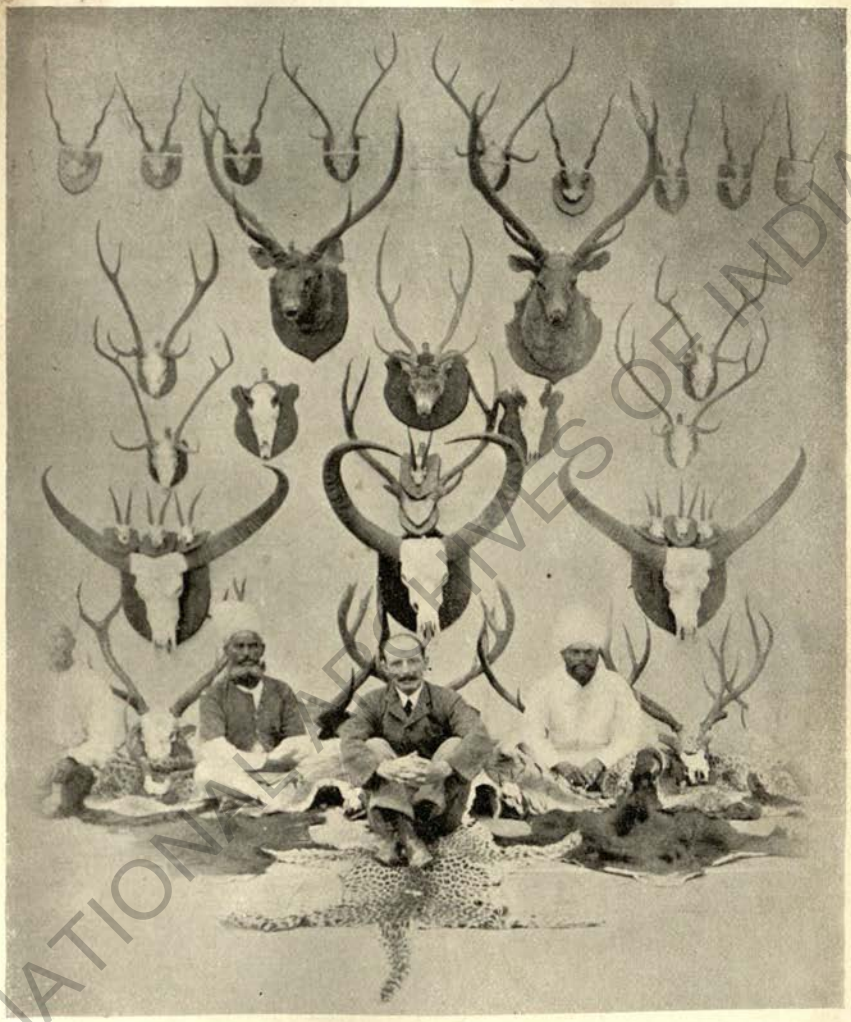

SOME JUNGLYPUR REMINISCENCES

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(4) The remedy. Suggestions as to greater restrictions, the issue of licences, the actual weapons that should be licensed for protection; any observations on the sale of arms and ammunition to natives, close seasons, penalties for offences, etc.

(5) Traders in pelts, trophies, plumes, etc., their influence on the decrease of game.

(6) Any other remarks bearing on the subject.

To this a large number of replies were received and tabulated, and at length the movement seemed to have acquired sufficient momentum to carry it towards success, when an untoward occurrence removed the guiding hand of a well-known resident of Calcutta, and resulted in the indefinite postponement of the plan of campaign.

At this stage the matter still rests. When it will revive is matter for conjecture.

The subject of game-preservation measures of a general (and at once effective) nature throughout India is one beset with many difficulties, which are not apparent until the matter is looked into rather closely. It involves some important issues—so important, indeed, that any too sudden approach might result in the shy birds we sportsmen are endeavouring to stalk being startled into such a flight as would take them for some time beyond our reach. So, until some practicable line of approach can be found or our game may have shifted into some more stalkable position, a policy of masterly inactivity would appear to be indicated.

Much, however, can be effected meanwhile by those in local authority, who have the interests of game preservation at heart, if they will keep a watchful eye on the issue of licences and make sharp examples of poaching offences. . . .

At the present time, five years after the above remarks were penned, the Government of India has at length stirred

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itself in the important question of game-preservation; and, working on the sensible plan of previously collecting information from almost every private as well as public source, is about to pass a Game Law for all India—an elastic statute that will enable the many diverse local peculiarities to be respected, suit the different means necessary in the so widely differing parts of so large a country, and deal fundamentally with every point which may aid in preserving so valuable an asset to the country at large.

Those who have so disinterestedly laboured to aid in this laudable project, usually with scant support or encouragement from the apathetic individuals who will benefit most by the new legislation, may now rest satisfied with the result of their aims so long and patiently held before the public and the powers that be. To them and to the few high officials who have put their shoulders to the wheel, and seen this measure through, future generations of Indian sportsmen and lovers of nature owe more than they will ever know.

A further consideration of the game-destroyers of India brings us to those great pests of the jungle—the wild dogs.

Decrease in the numbers of game, such as deer, etc., would lead one to infer that a corresponding falling off might be expected in those predatory animals directly dependent on them for food and existence; yet there is little doubt that the numbers of the wild dog (*Cyon*, or *Cuon Dakhanensis*) have largely increased of late years, while their usual habits of retirement and shyness before the face of man also seem to have undergone a change. Even within the experience of the writer, the wild dog, once almost a *rara avis*, has become far too common.

One has only to note the effect of an incursion of these deadly little hunters into a game-bearing section of country to realise their power. Let but the scent of a few wander-

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ing *cyons* arise in such haunts, and, as if by magic, every other creature scatters and disappears. Not only is there a rapid exodus of the *Bovidæ* and *Cervidæ*, but even the terror-striking feline himself—tiger and panther alike—seems to receive an urgent call to other localities far removed from the disturbing presence of the red dogs.

The writer once had an opportunity of witnessing a case of one such sudden *débâcle*. He had made an excursion from his standing camp to verify reports received of a tiger which was killing in some distant coverts, and had set off on his ride one hot afternoon. It was towards the cool of evening that the track, which had been passing through a bleak succession of bare, rocky hills, suddenly descended to a secluded valley full of the kind of covert beloved of spotted deer. Forced to the surface by horizontal beds of hard laterite, where the little stream turned close in under the hill, a succession of small shallow pools gladdened the eye down a vista of waist-high grass and scattered woodland. As we passed along its mile or so of length, this charming oasis seemed to be literally alive with chital, whose dappled hides could be seen in all directions as the deer went leaping off, or halted to gaze fixedly at the intruder in all their graceful beauty.

Marking at least one stag as worth returning for later, we loitered on our way, charmed with the beautiful sight.

The night was spent at a village. Next morning it was found that the tiger, which only the day before had killed a cow in the vicinity, had completely disappeared, as also the remains of his kill, owing, so local news ran, to the arrival of a pack of *cyons*.

At almost the same hour next evening, therefore, we entered the chital valley on our return journey.

To our astonishment it was completely deserted, and wore that appearance, unmistakable to an accustomed eye, of utter desolation and absence of animal life.

This was extraordinary; so my man and I separated,

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and rode in search through the grassy hollows that only twenty-four hours since had teemed with spotted deer. It was as if yesterday we had beheld some fairy vision, some illusory caprice of the brain.

But soon were we to become aware of the reason of the solitude so swiftly fallen on this favoured spot.

As we approach the line of pools, what is that dark red beast—and another—standing by the water's edge, while yet more emerge from the grassy covert around?

Rich, deep red coats; sharp snouts; rounded prick ears; thick brushes, tipped with black. It is the red dogs—the terrorisers of the jungle—the poachers!

Out of the saddle sharp, and snatch the little rifle from its bucket. Then quickly down behind that long grass. As we raise our heads cautiously behind this little tree, the dogs can be seen boldly regarding us.

Bang! Over rolls one, and they turn and hasten off. Bang! again, and another twists sidewise into the jungle, where he is soon found and disposed of.

In the distance the survivors can be heard as they move off, uttering their strange, almost bird-like call—"*Phew! Phew!*"—a call that is remarkably similar to that of the chital hind when she seeks her wandered fawn.

On another occasion I was prowling the jungles bordering the Sipna river one morning in late February. Rain had fallen the previous night, and as I entered a beautiful sequestered glen running at right angles to the main valley, my attention was attracted by a number of vultures sailing towards a point half a mile away; whence also came the raucous cawing of crows. Making my way through the now sodden and silent leaves—what a change from the crackling and rustling of other days!—and the long, dripping grass, which exhaled a pleasant herb-like scent, I at length arrived at and peered over a little knoll. Below me lay a little open clearing by the rocky bed of the stream; a tiny cascade fell into the head of a cool

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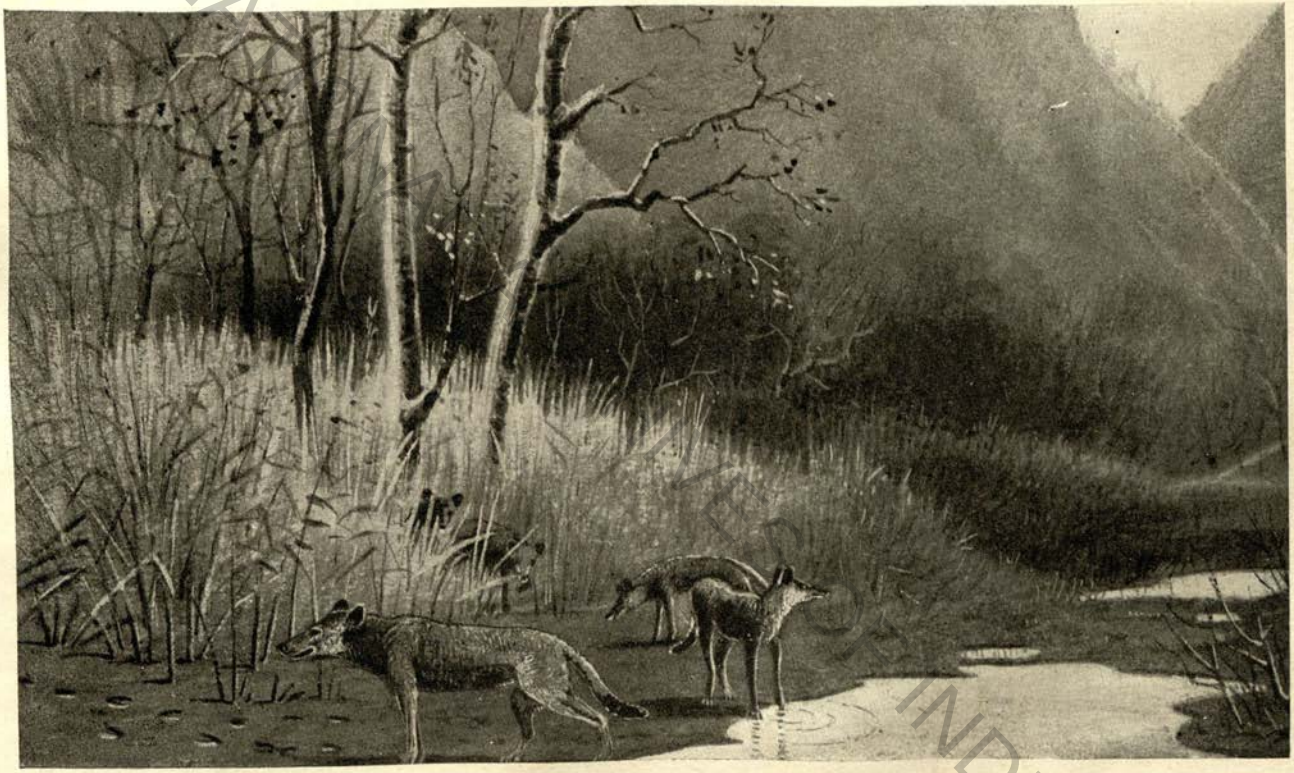

THE POACHERS (Cyon Dukhunensis)

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green pool; and on the flat rocks around it lay a pack of wild dogs.

I wriggled a little nearer, and watched this interesting group from a distance of about thirty yards. Half sunk in the water reddened by his blood lay the carcase of a young sámbar, while his murderers reposed in various easy attitudes around. A couple of them, not yet fully gorged, tugged at a leg projecting above the water, and every now and then made a furious charge, leaping and snapping, among a crowd of expectant vultures that sat importunately around. Bits of flesh lay here and there on the rocks by their satisfied owners. Whether it was the change in tone of the cawing of *Corvus*, ever watchful on the tree on the bank, a slant of betraying wind, or an instinctive feeling of impending danger, I do not know, but after about five minutes there was a sudden stampede in my direction; so calling to my orderly to use the ·577 with the best possible effect on the brutes, the sharp crack of the ·303 sounded the death-knell of one of the rascals, and another escaped hard hit. I regret to say that the ·577 did not have a look in at all, for I should have liked to exterminate the whole gang.

While skinning the wild dog, a couple of Korkus arrived and asked to be permitted to take away all that remained of the sámbar. From these jungle-men I gathered that they, in common with the crow and vulture, were very frequently supplied with meat by these marauding packs.

Although counting myself lucky at having had this glimpse into the inner life of the jungle, I should have liked still better to have been in at the death. It must have been a fine sight—the failing deer making, with the instinct of his race, for the last resource (water), the fierce attack of the hungry dogs, and the final struggle in the pool. A scene well worthy of the brush.

Again the scene is changed. I am walking up the old

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Belkhéra glen. The way lies up the damp stony bed of the stream, between short steep scarps that enclose it on either hand. Just before turning off to ascend the valley side, up the abominably steep Tórghát, I heard something moving uphill, and after a while spied the horns of a young stag sámbar showing now and then above the long grass. He was creeping quietly along the hillside, and I watched him for a time, wondering where he was going, this particular spot being an unusual one in which to find deer.

On turning my head, as a movement caught my eye, a wild dog quietly walked into the bed of the *nála*, and stood gazing in the direction the stag had taken, while another emerged from behind a rock, "nosing" slowly along. I should have liked to have watched their movements, but was so exposed to view that the dogs must see me next moment: so fired at once, knocking over the nearer of the two. As I did so, a third bounded away to my left. The one I had hit dragged itself up the bank and into some grass, where it was found dead.

While examining it, the other dogs were heard calling to each other in some neighbouring ravines; so I tried to copy their curious whistling note as best I could.

To my surprise one of the dogs returned. He came trotting inquiringly back along the bed of the stream, stopping suddenly as he caught sight of my hat; and I missed him, as he turned and ran. However, that was not a bad morning's work, for no fewer than ten pups were removed from the female I had shot, together with a large quantity of freshly bolted meat, some scraps of sámbar hide, and the complete fore pads of a hare!

The sportsman should never lose an opportunity of destroying wild dogs, even at the expense of disturbing other game which he may be following at the time. If some wholesale method of getting rid of these deadly vermin could be devised, the now attenuated herds of deer

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and other creatures on whom they prey would have some chance of regaining their former abundance.

As yet the only useful method seems to be that of raising the amount of the Government award for their destruction, and issuing special forest licences to trustworthy native *shikáris* for this purpose—a plan which is already being tried in some places.

It may be argued by some that the interest in game-preservation displayed by sportsmen has its origin in selfish motives, and that they would not exert themselves much in the matter if it did not affect their own sport. In acknowledging that such considerations influence one to a certain extent, in addition to the desire, which all lovers of nature have, of staying the ruthless depopulation of a country, these are not the only pleas in favour of putting a stop to the present waste of jungle life.

The effect that apparently insignificant matters often exercise on large issues should not be lost sight of. If India, in the not very distant future, is to become depleted of her game, and so hold out fewer inducements to young men of sporting proclivities, she may cease to attract to her public services many recruits of a desirable type. In addition to this, it would be a calamity if this country, which has so long offered such advantages to men of keen hunting instincts but small means, should cease to occupy its position as one of the finest training grounds for English sportsmen and soldiers. The advantages of *shikár* for the soldier is a theme that may be rather oversung by enthusiasts; but it cannot be denied that it is a distinctly useful taste for him to indulge, assisting to develop, as it does, many other qualities besides those of hunting, tracking, and an "eye for country."

It must have been noticed that the Englishman, in his passion for games and athletic exercises, is tending evermore towards those which are carried out in a confined space. There is a place for most things, and our choice

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of games is usually good; but to find men bound exclusively to the cramping limits of, say, a racquet-court's four walls, when there is easy access to an almost limitless expanse of free open country around, affording almost every opportunity for the use of the horse, gun, rifle, or spear, seems to imply a lack of versatility.

There may be numerous reasonable causes of this tendency to exercise one's self after the manner of the squirrel in its cage; but sometimes it is not difficult to trace its results—especially in the case of the soldier-officer.

Considerations such as these cannot fail to advance the plea for the preservation of Indian game.

To pass to other *shikár* subjects, there is a topic of considerable interest of which the writer was reminded the other day on meeting a friend who had lately returned from an expedition to certain jungles not unknown to fame as the resort of big game.

Although good shots and keen *shikáris*, he and his equally youthful companion had succeeded in securing only one tiger, whereas their bag of bears, leopards, and deer was quite a good one.

In the course of conversation my friend discussed, with some pardonable heat, the suspicions he had formed with regard to the reasons of failure with the tigers, and having a vivid recollection of similar experiences ourselves, we found ourselves able, not only to confirm his suspicions, but to suggest other causes, which, as it subsequently transpired, fitted his case with remarkable accuracy.

These young men had long and eagerly planned this particular trip, and having, as they thought, arranged preliminaries satisfactorily, after much trouble, they had set out with not ill-founded anticipations of a roseate hue. Reaching their shooting-ground at a very considerable expenditure of their slender means, and not a little patience by the way, they had, although not entirely novices in

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tiger *shikár*, gone through an immense amount of hard work to no purpose, which had finally resulted in the incapacitating of one of them by jungle fever. Although almost all their available time—two months—had been spent in working for tigers, they had only succeeded in shooting one—and that one by mere chance. On the other hand, as regards less noble game, hard work had met with its reward. That tigers were there is proved by the fact that a week or two later a local official—a man of no experience in *shikár*—following almost in their footsteps, had shot seven, while the total number of these animals killed in that district during the same year amounted to over twenty.

Some of his experiences, angrily related by the disappointed sportsman, were of an extremely diverting nature, though in no wise unfamiliar to those acquainted with oriental subtleties. But, divested of their humorous wrapping, these are pills, at the swallowing of which the Englishman makes a very wry face, and at such pernicious influences as they reveal his gorge rises in indignation and disgust.

Accustomed to a mode of dealing at least fair and square, we are peculiarly liable to be deceived by the easy hypocrisy that, generally speaking, comes so naturally to the Eastern mind; so, although the following matter is the reflection of no novel experience, it may have its use in resetting the edge of one's memory, or serving as a hint to those whose "tender, trustful years" may render them prone to appraise their Aryan brethren—and some others—by their own standards.

In order to appreciate the following remarks, it should be remembered that the tiger—that magnificent brute to whose pursuit even the jaded, *blasé* sportsman returns with a never-failing interest—is a creature of remarkably open modes of life. Under favourable circumstances his probable line of action can be previously determined with

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almost monotonous certainty, especially by those jungle-men or local native *shikáris* whose acquaintance with a particular beast may almost partake of the nature of personal acquaintance; while on most occasions, although one may be unable to encompass his undoing, a practical certainty can be made of ensuring his flight to other haunts—in other words, of frightening him away.

It is this power of a clever *shikári* to take the tiger, with a little arrangement, in the hollow of his hand, that unfortunately makes it possible for the pampered guest or courted globe-trotter to recline at his ease in a comfortable *machán* (plush-lined and otherwise sumptuously fitted in some instances!), set down his half-finished champagne cup at a touch from his attendant, and murder the splendid brute that has been guided within easy range of his post by an army of fawning parasites, aided, in their turn, by the plucky unarmed beaters assembled to cater for the "sport" of the *Burra Sahib!*

Meanwhile the hard-working resident *shikári*—of small means probably—who, right or wrong, regards the denizens of the jungles as rather his, by virtue of the life he has given to the service of the country, can, on meeting with a crafty underhand opposition, only chew his bitter mortification and vow to desert the pursuit of the "royal beast" for that of game, which is only the prize of him who works hard for it—a vow which is quickly forgotten as the fascination of tiger *shikár* returns in all its inevitable force.

And so the tale proceeds; from the by no means overdrawn picture of the favoured guest downwards. The tiger bears his price on his head; and on the payment of that price, be it in coin, or in kind, he usually goes to the highest bidder—all of which detracts from the value of his pursuit as compared with those forms of hunting into which pecuniary considerations do not enter to such a degrading extent, and throws a considerable amount of

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doubt over the claim to good sportsmanship laid by the man who has "slain his hundred tigers."

To continue our theme.

As a rule the Indian mind seems to attain its greatest brilliance when engaged in the congenial occupation of *khat-pat*—the petty intriguing and childish cunning that derives its power from its very weakness and apparent insignificance. Here indeed is something that the Oriental thoroughly understands, for the sake of which he readily deserts his usual condition of apathy, and on which he enters with a perverted zest that in a better cause would command our admiration, applying thereto all the wile of a brain the workings, the inconsequence, and the vagaries of which are often incomprehensible to Western ideas.

In addition, the Indian, even of lowly degree, is no mean student of human nature, and is keenly alive to the benefits that may accrue to him by the judicious conciliation of those set in authority over him. We find, therefore, that he is an instrument that can be played on with a light touch and remarkable success by quite an ordinary performer.

Keeping in view the direction of these preliminary observations, let us imagine some Indian "district" which contains good hunting-grounds giving shelter to a typical fauna, including tigers, and that in such a district an "outsider" desires to indulge his fondness for sport. Now it is possible that he may imagine that all his difficulties end with the receipt of permission to shoot in those jungles; but, if he is wise, he will recognise that there are a few preliminaries to settle before arriving at this delightful consummation.

It may be that all of the district officials are keen on shooting: and this is certain to complicate matters, and make the case the most difficult of all for our "outsider" to tackle; for there is no avoiding the fact that the officials administering a district in various capacities are usually in

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a position to bring pressure to bear on refractory subjects at their will, while the inhabitants are practically bound to observe their wishes in such matters as are here treated of.

Or it may be that none of them care for the pleasures of the jungle; and here the path would appear more smooth —which however depends on a variety of other circumstances.

Let us however take a simple case—from which those more involved may be inferred by the reader—and assume that of the four or five district officials, the Deputy-Commissioner is the only one keen on shooting.

Although it depends on several factors, it may be taken for granted that a Deputy-Commissioner has the power to make himself, within certain wide limits, absolute autocrat of the country he administers. In such a position he forms a point on which the attention of his native subordinates is focussed, and is the centre (sometimes unconsciously) of a keen struggle for advancement of an official, commercial, or private nature. There is a continual effort to enlist his sympathies, to gain his ear, to obtain by his fancied favours some apparently trivial advantage; and it may be imagined therefrom that few points of his character escape notice. What, then, more natural than that those who are able should lose no opportunity of ministering to his taste for sport, should he possess such, nor hesitate to employ any means that they imagine may aid them to gain his favour by so doing?

From this it is not difficult to infer the effect on the sport of the "outsider" should the Deputy-Commissioner show the least tendency to look askance at men making shooting excursions into his domain; nor indeed the crushing results of an active dog-in-the-manger policy when he actually sets impeding machinery in motion.

At the same time those who theorise to the effect that district officials have no more right to the game than have men from a distance, are apt to forget the workings of

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human nature. It is not unnatural for these officials to imagine that they have a kind of prior claim. And if, as is done in some districts, an area of reasonable size be set apart for their sport, few of us would complain. Unfortunately it seems easier to some natures to grant the outsider permission to enter their imaginary preserves, and then assume an attitude which is only too easily read by obsequious native underlings.

To what lengths such practices have been known to proceed may be seen in the case of a certain jealous official, who was in the habit of issuing two differently coloured forms of *permit-de-chasse*. A pink card appropriately signified to forest and other minions that the efforts of the holder were to meet with a rosy success, while a plain white passport was a tacit indication of the blankness of the unfortunate recipient's prospects!

So much for the more depraved side of the question. Let us now take the more usual case of the district official of open-handed generosity who, though keen himself, wishes to share sport fairly with visitors. Here, again, alas! we experience the deceitfulness of this land of our exile; for the mere fact of the "*Dipty Sahib*" being fond of shooting erects a formidable stumbling-block in the path of our "outsider." Even against his express orders, his dusky subordinates, appreciatively scenting some fancied subtlety, redouble their efforts on his behalf; and his kindly intentions are likely to be frustrated by the very people he may have deputed to help the stranger that is within his gates.

Some years ago a good fellow of this description had invited a young subaltern to join him in his annual tiger-shoot; but do what he would to place his guest in the most favourable positions, the tiger was invariably driven up to the post which he himself had taken up.

Realising at length that tigers were assets apparently too valuable to his *shikári* to be thrown away on a youth-

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ful and unknown visitor, the host bethought himself of a stratagem.

"Now, then, Daghabáz Khan!" said he to the astute individual who occupied a position analogous to that of head keeper, "this won't do! The *Chóta Sahib* is not getting any sport. Put him in the best position again, will you, *and see that the tiger goes to him this time!*"

"*Sahib,*" replied the Oriental, with a perfectly acted appearance of injured innocence, "have I not been doing so all along, according to your honour's commands? And yet (*Allah* witnesseth!), what can I do! The animal *will* go to your honour! Yet if the *Chóta Sahib* will this time take *this* post"—indicating what was in this particular beat undoubtedly the only route for a driven tiger —"perchance his luck may turn."

Some time after the subaltern had occupied his perch and heard the head *shikári* move off, he was startled by a low whistle from the jungle behind him; and beheld his host, finger on lip and twinkle in eye, making signals to him to descend.

"Just exchange positions with me, my dear fellow," he heard him say, "and mind you go quietly, for the old man has left a 'stop' in a tree not far away."

The change was duly effected, and this time all went as it should—except, indeed, for Daghabáz Khan.

The beaters approached. The tiger appeared. But, strange to relate, he had failed to take his natural line; and he halted, as if actuated by clock-work, right under the tree where the Députy-Commissioner should have been—but was not!

Hardly had the echoes of two rapid shots died away, and been succeeded by the reassuring note of the *sahib's* whistle, than Daghabáz Khan was to be seen standing submissively beneath the successful sportsman's *machân.*

"*Hazúr,*" he began smugly, "I did my best. But the

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luck of the *Chóta Sahib* must indeed be evil, for, as your honour sees, the tiger——"

"Don't mention it, Daghabáz Khan!" came from aloft, the confounding accents of the delighted *Chóta Sahib* himself. "Verily art thou the prince of *shikáris;* and, for this my success to-day will I bestow on thee a testimonial transcending in its flattering terms all those already in thy possession!"

We now begin to see some of the difficulties likely to beset the path of the undesired visitor on tigers intent.

Although it is very tempting, the writer feels that too much space has already been devoted to this subject to allow of further anecdote exemplifying the working of the wiles employed. The reader is therefore referred to the Appendix, to the obscurity of which the disclosure of these depravities is relegated.

Most of the dodges therein revealed were picked up by the writer sadly, regretfully, one by one, as they were traced to one Jhoot Singh, a handsome, apostle-featured *shikári* of Rájpút descent, once deputed to accompany his camp after the manner of the confidential gillie who leads the deluded guest into a Scottish deer forest with tacit instructions to "show" a few stags.

Gifted with a most prepossessing exterior, and a cool stout heart, such a past master of the arts of humbug and chicane was Jhoot Singh that it was not until a year or two later that his true character transpired, when, bit by bit, the puzzle of his subtleties was pieced together. So clever had he been that a handsome "douceur" had changed hands on the occasion of our parting—which was accompanied by expressions of mutual esteem.

The manner of Jhoot Singh's exposure was thus. The writer had met the very "*Dipty Sahib*" who had then been in charge of that district—a man of a somewhat jealous, ardent nature—and he had been so goaded by a delicate reference to the success that the writer had forced, in spite

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of the thinly-veiled opposition of his native subordinates, that he could not resist a jeer at our estimation of Jhoot Singh's character; and so gave away, in the rash heat of his pique, not only the real nature of that worthy, but also the fact that he himself was not unacquainted with the object of his mission in our camp!

An amusing correspondence, published in the *Times of India* in December 1900, concerning certain Christmas shooting camps, seems to indicate that such jealousies are not necessarily restricted to any particular locality.

India being the last country in which such degeneracy of habit may be safely indulged in by public officials, it is incumbent on the shooting public to apply what antidotes they can, and lose no opportunity of assisting such fallen countrymen to recognise and correct the narrow-minded ways into which they have fallen, owing no doubt to a too long and intimate contact with native idiosyncrasies. But the means employed in dealing with these fortunately rare cases will necessarily have to be as subtle as the evil it is intended to counteract.

Within the last five years a notable change has taken place in the big-game sportsman's weapons, which suggests a subject too interesting to pass by without some brief notice.

This is the passing of the black-powder rifle, both of the "Express" and large-bore type, and the genesis of the cordite rifle of medium bore.

Up to about ten years ago sportsmen used either the large-bore rifle (or ball gun) or the express rifle, both with black powder. About that period it was discovered that the new military small-bore rifles possessed wonderful powers, when used with a suitable bullet, and these rifles so deservedly engaged the enthusiasm of many sportsmen that they emerged triumphantly from all kinds of troubles occasioned by faulty, smokeless "powders" and unsuitable

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bullets. As was natural, however, these rifles were soon tried beyond their powers and out of their own particular sphere. In some cases they exceeded their admirers' most sanguine hopes; in a good many others they led to very dire accidents on account of their general lack of "knocking-down" power.

So there grew a demand for weapons possessing similar advantages but of larger bore and greater power.

The outcome of this was the medium-bore cordite rifle, which has now become so popular.

It is worthy of note that the evolution of this type of sporting rifle is due to the skill and enterprise of a firm of London rifle-makers then supposed to occupy a somewhat second-rate position; the "leading" firms meanwhile apparently regarding its efforts with complacent humour. Their attitude however was altered when it was seen that such weapons had come to stay, and possessed qualities that rendered existing sporting rifles obsolete. So soon therefore as was compatible with an effort to keep up the prestige of the older weapons awhile, in order to avoid a slump in their value, the "leading" firms began to follow their pioneer's lead, and to turn out new rifles, differing by a few hundredths of an inch in the diameter of the bore—for the sake of an appearance of "originality," or in order to make a speciality of their own cartridges!

So rapidly did some manufacturers take up and turn out the new cordite rifles that they failed to pay proper attention to their peculiarities; and this resulted in some cases of failure and even of disaster to the breech or barrel—all of which reacted unfavourably on sportsmen, especially those of conservative ideas, who looked askance at such dangerous arms.

In addition, there occurred a few cases of sportsmen coming to grief, owing to the alleged failure of the new weapons to "stop" dangerous game.

Although this was to a certain extent due to the care-

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lessness of the sportsmen themselves, in not taking the trouble to use a suitable bullet, it was in some cases also attributable to the makers, who had failed to supply ammunition suited to the circumstances.

The medium-bore cordite rifle being a weapon of an "all-round" type, suitable for use against heavy thick-skinned game as well as animals of a lighter and soft-skinned type, it is necessary to use at least two kinds of bullets in it—(1) *penetrative*, which is represented by the solid nickel-covered bullet, and (2) *expanding*, which are of various types (soft-nosed—"peg"—hollow-pointed—"capped"—split, etc.). The latter, moreover, include bullets of greater and lesser degrees of expansive power, to which may be added the still lighter expansive bullet for use on the smaller harmless animals.

From these various kinds of bullets the manufacturers as well as the sportsmen should be able to choose a projectile suited to the work it is intended to do; and if they misuse a too penetrative bullet on a charging tiger or lion, or a too expansive one against the head of an elephant, they must take the consequences.

That manufacturers are often as much to blame as sportsmen in this connection is proved by the absurd advertisements one sees describing the powers of some of these new rifles. There is so much effort made to prove that they possess greater penetration and striking power than the old black-powder weapons that, manufacturer leading sportsman astray, they both forget that there is other game beside pachyderms, and fall into such absurdities as gauging a rifle's usefulness by its power to punch holes in an armour plate! And so the tale proceeds. Off goes the hunter, armed with some theoretical paragon of a rifle guaranteed to penetrate so many inches of steel plate—but of which he knows uncommonly little—certain of its marvellous effect against all and every kind of big game, and imagining that all he has to do is to press trigger,

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when the doomed animal will, to use a favourite phrase, "fall as if struck by lightning!"

But when the inevitable catastrophe arrives, no allowance is made for the fact that, on occasions, nothing in the way of firearms appears capable of "stopping" an animal unless struck in brain or spine; so, condemned out of hand, without a thought as to the real reason, nothing can then be too bad for the wretched weapon!

Many men have been disappointed with these new rifles when making trial of them on antelope, etc. They expect so much of these weapons that it is disappointing to find that, in such cases, their killing power does not seem to be much advance on the old "Express." But they should suspend their judgment, and not be disheartened until they have given the cordite rifle a trial against heavy game, when its extraordinary power, meeting with the requisite amount of resistance, will be fully developed.

The many advantages of the medium-bore cordite rifle are too well known to require repetition. Its disadvantages seem apparent in but one direction—its somewhat excessive weight when made in the double-barrelled form.

Single-barrelled rifles of this type are not of all-round use, while in them recoil is unpleasantly increased. Magazine rifles of this class have been attempted, but hitherto seem to have been only dangerous failures.

That the new weapons, when properly constructed, can be perfectly satisfactory under Indian conditions is proved by the fact that the writer, in practice and in *shikár*, has fired over six hundred rounds from his (a ·400—55—400. hammerless, top-snap action) under all climatic conditions of the plains of India, using it with perfect results against almost every kind of game there to be found. The breech action and barrels are as true and tight as when received from the makers (in 1899), and the weapon, except for slight wear to the browning, is not to be known from a new and unused weapon.

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Although it is possible utterly to neglect and mishandle a black-powder rifle without actually courting disaster thereby, the cordite rifle cannot be so treated with impunity. Its care may be entrusted to no native servant; its owner must be prepared to repay its excellence by his personal unremitting attention; and it is necessary for him to have some knowledge of its peculiarities.

The following may be useful to some of those who possess or think of owning cordite rifles:—

Purchase (direct if possible) from a reliable firm—avoid light rifles—carefully inquire whether the rifle has been tested with ammunition under conditions of temperature up to maximum solar heat of India—get ammunition from the makers direct, or through their special agents—familiarise yourself with every detail of your rifle—make its condition your personal care. Rust or heavy-settled fouling will send up pressures rapidly—before loading, be particularly careful to remove all oil from (i.) the cartridge; (ii.) the bore; and (iii.) the chamber, all of which, if left oily, might give increased pressure—do not *unnecessarily* expose your ammunition to great heat, although it is a fact that cordite resumes its normal condition when recooled.

To sum up the matter of the Indian sportsman's battery is a matter of difficulty, as among men of differing views different ideas naturally prevail, and even when these are sifted it is difficult to particularise.

The result of fifteen years' experience, however, which the writer has had with various rifles, has been examined and an average struck. The weapons coming under notice have been as follows:—

8-bore rifle, 10-bore and 12-bore Paradox, 12-bore rifle, ·557 magnum (Sam. Baker pattern) rifle, ·500 magnum rifle (440 grain bullet), ·500 express, ·450 cordite (Rigby's) rifle, ·400 cordite (Jeffery's) rifle, ·303, Mauser ·275, and Mannlicher ·256.

From the above it seems that no satisfactory truly all-

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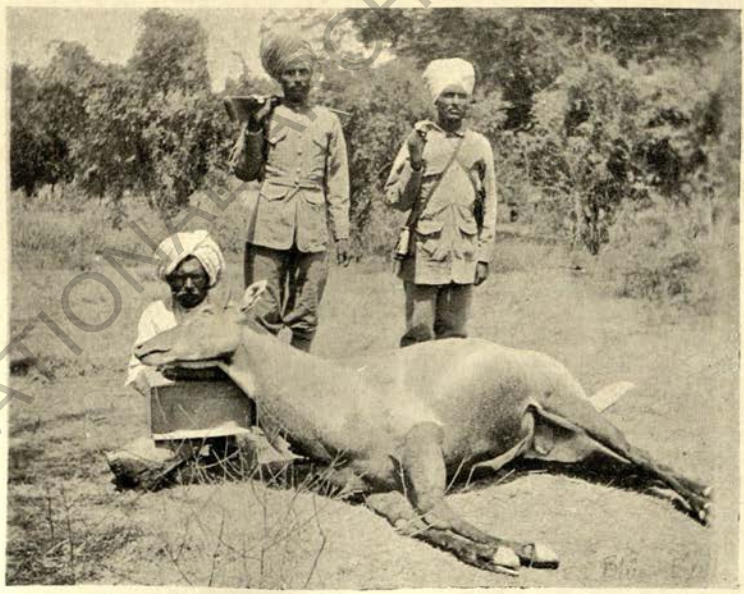

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round rifle yet exists; after that, a choice of weapons rests largely with the sportsman himself. Allowing that a smokeless propellant is in all ways superior to black powder, the rest is a question of a man's build and physique. *If he can handle it*, the bigger the bore the better for close jungle work. For ponderous game the medium-bore cordite rifle comes in first favourite. For dangerous soft-skinned game, at close ranges, the ball and shot gun of the Paradox type, not smaller than 12-bore, if used with a solid bullet of *pure* soft lead. For long sporting range shooting at harmless game, on hill or plain, the ·303, as giving rather better killing power than the smaller bores. In these three we have succeeded in reducing to the minimum a long list of weapons.

Except for use on ponderous game, with the proper bullet, the high-velocity rifle appears perhaps to have almost too high a velocity for sporting purposes. Throughout a considerable experience it has been noted that, although perhaps actually conveying less *damage* to the animal struck, the slower travelling ordinary express bullet —or the Paradox bullet—*knocks down* an animal of the soft-skinned dangerous type—especially should the bullet miss bones and strike tissues or a fleshy portion only—whereas the ·400 or ·450 cordite rifle, *unless it strikes a large bone*, appears rather to numb its victim with the extraordinary velocity of its projectile, which seems on some occasions to lose knocking-down power in an impact which is so sudden and penetrative.

There seems to be less chance of an animal eventually getting away when hit by a high-velocity rifle; but the slower-travelling bullet rolls a tiger, panther, or bear over, at least temporarily, and enables one to put in more shooting before it can regain its legs. Dynamics appear to bear out our argument. It is the knock-down push or blow that is so useful in that short second of time when a man may be reached by a brute thirsting for his blood; and that this

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is best conveyed at close quarters by a handy ball-and-shot gun with 3½ to 4 drams of powder in the case of a 12-bore seems incontestable. What we require now is a reliable *smokeless* powder for use behind the Paradox ball, for the smoke produced by black powder is very undesirable, especially in a damp atmosphere; and this seems to have been at length produced, and recently pronounced a success.

Among those who set out on shooting expeditions in India each year are many who have little or no personal experience in the pursuit of big game. Most keen men of this description are great consumers of sporting literature, more especially of that which bears the character of the reliable text-book from which the rudiments at least of big-game shooting may be gleaned. In addition it is usual to find them subscribing to Indian sporting papers. Every man who has a taste for *shikár* has to pass through a period of more or less apprenticeship in hunting craft—but only a fortunate few with the advantage of a seasoned adviser—and it is perfectly natural that during this period they should be largely influenced by what they read. The effect of this ought to be that men whose writings may possibly influence the budding *shikári* should take particular care to publish nothing without careful thought of the possible consequences.

In some cases the effects of publishing doubtful or erroneous theories may be harmless, resulting in nothing more serious than disappointment to him who unwarily pins his faith thereto, but in others the consequences may have highly dangerous results.

Every year, as regularly as the shooting season comes round, the tale of disaster is added to; and every year, until the shooting season ends, do we continue to note the recurrence of accidents to sportsmen—usually by the agency of dangerous game. Commonly it is the youthful and inexperienced who come to grief. But occasionally the matured *shikári* falls a victim; and in such cases one

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realises the truth of the adage about "accidents occurring in the best-regulated families"!

The element of danger is of course inseparable from the pursuit of dangerous game; indeed, it seems to lend that spice of adventure so inviting to the ordinary Englishman's heart, and a large portion of the excitement and consequent keenness; but it is surely not so desirable as to warrant taking no precautions against it, or coming at handgrips with disaster for want of a little ordinary prudence.

It is a well-known fact that there are men who are not to be turned from dangerous courses by the warning of others, or even, in this instance, by the actual experience of somebody else's death or severe injury; but very few who have once come to grief themselves behave in this manner. It is a pity that their warnings are not paid more attention to, for they alone are capable of appreciating the results of such mistakes. As noted before, there are circumstances which are beyond one's control, cases in which the most cautious and experienced of men may fall victims to an unhappy combination of unfortunate chances which one calls "bad luck"; but the majority of accidents are due to a disregard or ignorance of the rules of this very exciting game, while in not a few instances they are distinctly the result of faulty advice and dangerous theories.

One of the latter, which is directly responsible for the loss of many a useful life, is the *unqualified* and far too comprehensive assumption that *a wounded feline should be followed up.*

The writer is aware that he is treading on delicate ground here, but to the indignant snort which he fancies he can hear in some quarters he would reply—not to form too hasty a conclusion until the question has been carefully examined from both sides—*all* sides rather, might we say.

How often does one come across such ill-advised though no doubt well-meant phrases as: "Every sportsman who

wounds a feline must be prepared to follow it up—*on foot* if necessary—until he kills it. . . . If a man is not prepared to follow up the tiger he has wounded he has no business to go out tiger shooting"—and so forth.

Excellent theorising no doubt, but savouring of the armchair, and too general in its character; also dangerously devoid of qualifying matter. It is not difficult to imagine the effect of such a postulate so frequently dinned into the ears of an inexperienced man, an apprentice in the art of *shikár*. To such it becomes one of the inflexible laws—the "right thing to do"—a "rule of the game." He becomes imbued with the "heroic" nature of the assumption, gallantly responds to its stimulus, goes ahead as thoughtlessly as his unknown lawmaker has issued his ukase—and, in time, suffers.

The trouble may not come at once, nor for a long time; and in such a case the unfortunate man often becomes hopelessly reckless. But it is nearly always bound to arrive in time. And should the state of that man be as now hinted, its result will probably be proportionately severer.

Originators of such misleading doctrines will of course argue that they merely state them as guiding principles, and that people should be capable of modifying them according to the circumstances of the moment. They, however, ignore the fact that the very men whom such teachings affect are those who are incapable through inexperience of judging of the amount of the necessary modification. And herein lies the danger.

The inexperienced sportsman (not necessarily a novice be it noted) meets tigers, finds them, generally speaking, timid of man, and, even when wounded, usually only desirous of making good their escape. Then, some day, he wounds one; it disappears into ground apparently offering little concealment; his natural impulses may be those of caution, but no—"*a wounded tiger must be followed up!*".

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In he goes, and out comes the maddened brute, utilising all those terrifying qualities with which it has been so richly endowed by nature for the express purpose of intimidation; the sportsman *may* be of extraordinarily exceptional nerve, he *may* place his shots with unusual accuracy, projected from the most perfect rifle for the purpose, but this may be one of those not uncommon instances in which a wounded animal appears impossible to stop—and the results are then tragic.

Not until the peculiarly dreadful effects of a "mauling" are personally experienced is it possible to realise what they mean. Accidents of this sort usually occur when far from any kind of medical aid or comfort, and at a time of year when the Indian climate is particularly unfavourable to the chances of recovery for a wounded man. Whether the victim oneself, or the person responsible for the care of the man who has been mauled, one such experience is usually amply sufficient to demonstrate that the "reckless" game is *not* worth the candle. It is not the intention here to "make yer flesh creep," but it does not require a very great deal of imagination to picture the amount of trouble and distress consequent on an accident of this kind: the anxiety of those attending a delirious man burning with fever and swollen with poisoned wounds; the difficulties of transporting him in perhaps a wild and sparsely populated jungle; the possibility of the sufferer being alone, by himself, attended only by terrified native servants; and the fatal dangers of "shock" and blood-poisoning.

No man who had once realised such dire effects could sit down and elaborate the thoughtless and unqualified dictum so often responsible for them. And it is the business of every sportsman who "knows" to do his utmost to refute this dangerous counsel.

It is with the manner of the advice, not with the sound theory which underlies it, that our refutation is intended to

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grapple. The crude nature of such guiding rules might therefore be modified somewhat as follows:—

"Every sportsman who wounds a dangerous animal must be prepared to take such steps at his command as will prevent it from endangering human life, and at the same time make reasonable endeavours to save it from a painful and lingering death. Unless a man is prepared to so dispose of a wounded animal he has no business to go out shooting."

Now the means available for carrying out these necessary precautions vary very much, according to locality and circumstances. With a case when the services of an elephant are available we have nothing to do, as its aid enables the sportsman to follow up at once. Rather are we considering the case of the "foot" *shikári*, the rooster in trees, or rocks, or on the banks of steep *nálas*, or other vantage ground. What is he to do when he has wounded, we will say, a tiger? That a large number of felines are wounded and subsequently accounted for by men shooting "on foot" is a well-known fact, and it goes to prove that, given due caution and some knowledge of the animal's habits, there is a reasonable chance of securing a successful and safe termination to the proceedings. It is impossible to detail anything even like a fraction of the varying circumstances with which one may encounter; let us therefore take but two: (1) the successful recovery of a wounded tiger; (2) the unsuccessful attempt, with the consequent action necessary.

In the first case let us assume that the sportsman, perched aloft in tree or *machán*, rock, etc., has had a tiger beaten up to his post. He has fired at the animal, which has acknowledged the shot by a stumble or flinch, or perhaps by a temporary fall, or otherwise, and has then disappeared from sight beyond the post he occupies. The tiger has not been in any way located by any "stops" which the *shikári* may have posted, but has passed beyond their ken.

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It may be that the stricken brute has proceeded along a ravine with steep banks; into a jungle where there is no long grass or thick covert, but plenty of trees affording a perch over fifteen feet in height; among a series of gullies or steep spurs of a more or less grassless nature; or into any similar ground that will usually permit of one's seeing him before he can view his pursuers, or only find them when they are in some secure coign of vantage. In any case the sportsman has, we assume, taken the precaution of waiting an hour or two in order to give the wounded creature time to stiffen or die, or to move well away, should it be capable of moving freely on account of being only slightly wounded.

It is obvious that a really cautious search, by moving very slowly, scouting ahead from trees before advancing, and generally taking all possible common-sense precautions, ought, in such ground, to reveal the whereabouts of the wounded tiger and afford some opportunity for safely finishing him off. It may be that these operations towards recovery may extend over one day. Various considerations may also aid us in carrying out a successful and safe recovery of the wounded animal, besides the configuration of the country and its natural features. It may be that there is but one pool within many miles; the particular covert or jungle may be of confined extent; the soil may be sandy, or grass recently burnt, and so afford an easy means of tracking. The tiger may be found dead, or so disabled as to afford a chance of the finishing shot.

Now to regard the other side of affairs, the second series of circumstances, by reason of which our wounded beast cannot be brought to bag.

Assumed that the beat has been a difficult one, and the tiger an unusually truculent beast, hard to move, and prone to "go for" for the advancing line of beaters or "make faces" at the stops in their trees. In a very bad temper, he may have at last been forced past the *shikári*, and the

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shot or shots delivered without much idea of their effect, except that the tiger *has* been hit. Beyond the beat lies, let us say, level jungle composed of long grass, bushes, or thick undergrowth, with either unclimbable trees or no trees at all. This retreat we will assume to be of large extent, making it impossible to judge of the whereabouts of the wounded tiger which has been seen to enter it. The covert is too green to burn; or burning may be neither permissible nor useful; it may be too thick to allow of a search by galloping through it on horseback; a herd of domestic buffaloes may not be available or able to drive out or locate the wounded beast: access to water may be easy or plentiful; in fact, there may be absolutely no way of prosecuting our search with a reasonable prospect of safety. What is the sportsman, mindful and careful of his guiding principles, to do in such a case?

First of all, we take it, he should not think of leaving the vicinity until assured that all has been done that is possible. In tracts frequented by tigers it is usually perfectly easy to ensure that all wood-cutters, cartmen (if there be any roads or tracks in the neighbourhood), forest guards, and other officials and inhabitants generally shall be warned of the danger of entering the neighbourhood of the wounded tiger until all fears of his attacking intruders have disappeared. But even if this should not be possible to arrange, there is far less likelihood of human life being endangered by wood- or grass-cutters coming by accident on the wounded tiger than in an inadvisable and careless "following up," in which the sportsman subjects all the men accompanying him to a very considerable chance of injury. People should be posted to watch daily and incessantly for the appearance of vultures, crows, etc., that might result in the tiger being found dead. Buffalo calves, or other baits, should be tied up, on the chance of the tiger—if only slightly hit—revealing his whereabouts thereby. Men should be posted in available spots likely

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to be passed by the wounded tiger in endeavouring to make his way to distant haunts, and should watch at night from such places. Again, some days later on, means for searching the previously impossible covert may be procured.

The fact of the tiger being carnivorous and hot-blooded will usually result in almost any fairly placed effective bullet in almost any portion of his body, or limbs—if bones be broken—being fatal or entirely disabling within three days. A lesser degree of wound will in most cases permit of his moving away to a considerable distance, if not at once, then during the succeeding cool of night; and it is more than likely that in such cases he will be shyer of man than ever. The idea that a once wounded tiger will turn man-eater appears only to have been elaborated from the fanciful stories told by natives, whose superstitions lead them to imagine that such beasts will visit mankind with revenge for their injuries. It is open to doubt whether any such case has ever been verified by responsible sportsmen.

That a tiger, enraged by a lately inflicted wound and still suffering from it, will often attack a man if suddenly come on in its retreat, is doubtless true enough, and if left in possession of the body of its victim may in rare cases possibly eat of it; but this is not "man-eating," and it seems highly unlikely that human flesh so tasted would result in the particular animal forthwith turning "man-eater." Man-eating, by tigers at any rate, is probably due to chance or mistake in many instances; necessity—the result of a paucity of game or cattle—in others; while possibly, more than anything else it is the result of early training by a tigress-mother pushed to cater for hungry cubs.

The purport of these remarks is to endeavour to help break down the dangerous advice of pushing an incontinent and headlong "following up" of wounded felines;

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but as "prevention is better than cure," it may be useful to consider some points which may aid the foot *shikári* to obviate as much as possible the necessity of "following up" at all.

Enough has previously been said in order to endeavour to dissuade the inexperienced sportsman from placing himself at the mercy of a wild beast—without sufficient reason—but there is one point that might perhaps be touched on, and that is that some men appear to have an idea that a beast like a panther may, under favourable circumstances, be grappled with by a man using his hands alone, without serious result! How such extraordinary ideas can have got abroad is inconceivable. Let anyone try to lift up and carry for some distance a freshly killed panther even of small size—say 6½ feet—and, after fully realising the weight and slipperiness of the inert mass, let him imagine that mass full of all the life and vigour of its cat-like nature, and, every claw and fang bared, flying through the air with an energy inspired of furious rage. Then, if possible, let him be aware of the extraordinary rapidity with which all the cats inflict wounds, and he will be surprisingly dense if he cannot then realise what it means to wrestle with such a brute. That some cases have occurred in which powerful men have stood up under a very small panther's attack is, I think, true; but in the vast majority of cases a man is instantly knocked down and the mischief done before he can quite gather what has happened. The brute may then leave him, or be driven off, but since the true danger of wounds inflicted by the big cats lies in the septic poisoning set up in them, this is not much consolation.

It is with much diffidence that one turns now to the question of how to avoid, as much as possible, having to "follow up" these animals when wounded, and therefore much more likely to attack their pursuer. It is so easy to "make marks on a piece of paper," as the Bhil said to the

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Bábú, so difficult to apply them to practical uses. Seated in a comfortable chair, well fed, cool, and fit, it is no difficult matter to lay down the law and theorise away *ad libitum*, collect one's ideas, shuffle them together, and deal out high-sounding and plausible maxims. But events do not occur with such charming regularity or simplicity in the jungle. The nerves are not as they may be in the depths of the armchair. The sportsman is probably tired, or incapable of exerting his full strength under a burning and enervating sun. He may have been carrying a heavy rifle many miles on a not too well nourished "inside"; (how correct the ancients were in placing the focus of man's energies not in his heart, but in his "Little Mary"!), and he may have temporarily lost confidence through a run of "bad luck." It is under just such circumstances that one desires to take up the theorist and dash him and his postulates against a stone.

The first golden rule is "good *bundobust*," the second "straight shooting with a good weapon," and the third "good *bundobust*." Without the first it is difficult to ensure the second, while the lack of the second may render the third abortive. But the application of these rules varies. If the *shikári* is "sitting up" for a feline, good shooting will be largely aided by a "good *bundobust*," and further action thus made unnecessary.

If it is a case of a "beat" or "drive," when the sportsman awaits the game which his "beaters" endeavour to send up to his post, the result will depend on the same factors. Of shooting from elephant-back the writer has no experience.

As it is usually during or after a "beat" or "drive" that accidents with wounded felines occur, let us take such circumstances first of all.

The stereotyped "tiger beat" is usually a midday affair, conducted with a large amount of that noise at which our Aryan brethren are such adepts. And for this there is a variety of reasons. Should the baits which induce the

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tiger to kill and advertise his whereabouts have been tied up at any distance, the news of a kill will be correspondingly late, and a midday affair unavoidable—unless it is decided to wait for the comparative cool afternoon and evening. Time is also often unavoidably lost in the collection of sufficient beaters, which also throws the operations forward as regards time of day. During the heat of the Indian day a tiger is less inclined to move than when it is cool, and it may be that more persuasion is entailed thereby, although this appears to be a moot point. And again, the beaters, who are usually unarmed, cannot be blamed if they imagine that the production of a horrible din will safeguard them from the attack of the dreaded creature into whose lair they are venturing.

Yet another reason for the prevalence of the beat seems to lie in custom, the all-powerful *dustoor* of the changeless East, and this howling racketing mob, which the sportsman so well knows, is probably basing its methods on centuries of *shikár* as carried out by native potentates, before the European exploitation of Hindustán. It is not difficult to understand a double reason to underlie the forceful howling of the poor beater; not only had he to fear the claws and jaws of a feline foe, but it was highly probable that without vocal advertisement of his human identity he might become the unhappy recipient of javelin, arrow, or musket-ball. Nor are his fears on this last-mentioned score altogether visionary, even in our enlightened day!

These and other excellent reasons may underlie the employment of the "noisy" beat, but it is a pity to imagine that this "sealed pattern" method is the only means possible, or even the best.

It will have been noticed by most *shikáris* that nearly every wild animal has a natural aversion to being "driven," and possesses a wonderful instinct which leads it to attempt to "break back" through the beaters as soon as it has become evident to its senses that an attempt is being made

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to "drive" it. Some species of creatures possess this instinct or faculty to a much larger extent than others—in the writer's experience the little "jungly bukri" or barking deer is the quickest of all to execute this manœuvre. It is therefore advisable, as a rule, to guide the "driven" animal quietly, and without uproar, by which means its suspicions may be lulled, and it may be induced to move on quietly under the impression that it is merely avoiding some approaching human beings.

In this change of position the animal nearly always gives preference to a certain route. This "line" or route can, in most localities, be more or less definitely foretold according to the species of animal hunted and its habits, and to the nature of the ground, and should any of its enemies be personally acquainted with the ground and the routes likely to be taken, it follows that a still greater chance of success is gained. Of course, in some localities and at certain times of the year it is almost impossible to carry this art into execution, but such conditions are usually rare.

The consequence of this is that the fact that a "drive" is taking place ought, if possible, to be concealed from the creature which is being hunted; and the best way of arranging this is to have a silent beat, that is, without loud shouting or drumming, for the execution of which quite a few men are, as a rule, sufficient.

Another point to consider in the case of the tiger is that the "noisy" beat often annoys him, and as soon as the very self-evident uproar conveys its meaning to him he becomes extremely suspicious and bad-tempered, especially if he has been worried in a similar manner previously. He is then likely "to lie close" and endeavour to charge through the beaters; and accidents often occur in this manner. Again, if he should thus noisily be forced up to the sportsman's post, he is more likely to pass him too quickly for good shooting; while, if then wounded, he is far more likely to

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attack his pursuers or those who follow him up than if he had been quietly manœuvred and then received an unexpected and mysterious wound. As for a tiger (not previously worried, be it noted) being more difficult to move during the heat of the day, that is partly true; that is to say, he will not be likely to move so far at a time as when it is cool; but, understood that he is being guided in a *natural* direction, the writer's experience is that this naturally timid creature will shift his quarters readily enough, even on the hottest days of the Indian summer. Unless his approach to his post would be thereby disclosed, there seems to be no use—in fact there is harm—in the shooter taking up a very distant position. So long as the tiger is located, and does not know his enemy is there, it is an advantage to be so placed on the line of the tiger's retreat that his first leisurely move will bring him nicely within shot.

The best time for the quiet beat is in the morning, before it has become hot, and, to a lesser extent, the late afternoon and evening. The latter time, however, is short, and the approach of night often enables a wounded beast to travel too far for a successful finding later on.

The advantages of working during the cool hours of the Indian day are that the sportsman himself is then far more capable of making satisfactory arrangements—doing things himself—and of shooting straighter. Even should he command the services of an exceptionally good native *shikári* who is capable of running the whole "show"—and rubbing off a lot of the gilt from the ginger-bread thereby—and only have to ride close up to his tree, with a shady *machán* ready for him, the shooter will find himself in all respects handicapped by the fierce heat of noontide; and should trouble of any kind ensue, he may find himself physically incapable of carrying out all he may be anxious to perform. The white man's energy is at its lowest ebb during those terrible months of the hot weather, his appetite poor, his

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whole system loosened; and thus the keenest and strongest of us often find it an actual impossibility to fulfil the tasks we set ourselves. At such times it is easier to give advice than to accomplish what we know ought to be done; to theorise than to practise; to instil musketry principles than to shoot straight. Then it is that we owe our sport to the exertions of our native friends, whose dusky frames are better suited to labour under their fiery sun; and this is one of the greatest drawbacks to tiger-shooting, which, as a sport, is not to be compared to those forms of hunting in which one's success depends more largely on personal skill and effort.

Another matter which conduces to straight shooting and success is some handy means of obtaining a firm perch in a tree, so as to be able to use the rifle properly. To stand precariously balanced on some branch, able to fire in but one direction, and that with difficulty, is not the way to conduct operations against felines. It would be better to stand on *terra firma*, where one can at least employ one's weapon with effect and discretion.

To obtain some really practical means of securing this perch aloft is no easy matter. Putting aside the erection of a *machán* or platform of poles, which takes time and noise in the making, one must fall back on some portable arrangement which can be easily and quickly fixed aloft. There is the ordinary native bedstead, of course—useful enough, but difficult on which to change position quickly in the case of the quarry passing away to the shooter's right hand.

The same may be said of the leather cushion tied at four corners to the surrounding boughs; and of the shooting ladder, where the sportsman perches on the top rung. Best of all, of course, would be something that the sportsman himself might carry and fix aloft. This is, however, difficult to secure. After experimenting with various ideas, the writer has found a fairly useful device

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in the shape of a small wooden "crate" or open-sided box, about twenty inches square (inside measurement) and a couple of feet high. This is simply a square framework. *Nawár* (cotton webbing) or rope is then strongly woven across the bottom to form the flooring; and more of it may be woven or wound round the sides, the whole then forming a kind of open box. Long ropes are provided at the four upper corners, and a couple more are affixed to the bottom of the "crate," which can then be tied firmly into almost any kind of tree, or even to a perpendicular stem which has no branching limbs at all. A light jointed bamboo ladder will form a little luxury, while being sometimes a necessity in order to reach certain otherwise inaccessible points. One man for the "crate" and another for the ladder (if taken) will be found ample. When this portable *machán* has been fixed aloft, the shooter mounts to it, and may sit or stand for his shot, with the great advantage of being able to turn round rapidly in any direction. The flooring, being of soft material, is noiseless. A cushion will add some comfort when one perches on the rail of the "crate," and it is neither difficult nor cramping to spend a couple of hours or so in such a perch. Though extremely light, the disadvantage of all these arrangements is that one is still dependent on the aid of coolies to carry them; however, that is one of the accepted disadvantages of most Indian *shikár*. Teak-wood is the material used in this form of *machán* which the writer has used; but the joints are a difficulty, and the strain being considerable, the joinery is apt to work loose. Bamboo is unsuitable, being likely to creak. A metal framework would probably be too heavy. These are the difficulties. As to shape, it is possible that an oblong form might be an advantage, as the *machán* could then be inhabited with comfort for a longer period, and used as a perch from which to watch over "kills."

Having shown how the secure platform may be obtained,

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it remains but to counsel good shooting. Ay, there's the rub!—and what a difficult thing it is to make certain of that important, perhaps one and only first shot! Practice makes perfect, that's all right; but practice cannot always be had when out in the jungle. It is often impossible to indulge in it for fear of disturbing the surrounding country, and a week or so passed without firing a shot goes farther than most people know in putting one out of practice and self-conceit. Then there is the nature of the shot, which can seldom be chosen at one's leisure, the time for which may arrive suddenly and without warning, with the knowledge that no "sighters" are possible, but that the very first shot must be a bull's-eye—all these go to produce that state of over-anxiety called "shakiness." And misses are so infectious! One such egregious error, and how difficult it is to find the bull's-eye again! Besides this it is usually true that the keener the *shikári*, the worse is the effect of these disturbing influences.

To do one's self justice the only way is to reserve the shot until the animal is as close as it is likely ever to come. If sitting up over a "kill," the desire to take an easy shot which may present itself at fifty yards should be curbed if the animal is likely to approach within closer range. In a beat likewise, every yard of range should be taken advantage of. In many keen natures the intense anxiety to take the shot whenever the game is within fair distance seems overpowering, but it should be fought against; for the chance of a miss, with all its attendant trouble, or of a badly placed shot—which is usually a far graver affair—is not worth taking. At the actual moment of firing few of us seem aware of the vital importance of straight powder, but later on, when worn out by miles of tracking and hard work, of anxious search, or even when we realise some still more unfortunate result of our bad shooting, it comes home with great force. It is difficult to advise a cure for unsteady shooting. A good state of health, not

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too much smoking, avoidance of hurry, all are too well known to bear repetition. If practice with the big rifle cannot be had, it is useful to expend some ammunition with a miniature weapon, which often has a steadying effect.

To enlarge on the various arrangements of a "drive" or beat, the "stops," the "back-stops," the formation of the beaters, etc., would be out of place where so many far more experienced writers have expatiated before, besides which there is the great danger of applying purely local requirements in quite different and unsuitable ground or country. Indian shooting-grounds vary so enormously that the habits of the game inhabiting them cannot always partake of the same nature. Herein lies the misleading nature of the theories set forth in many of our best books on *shikár*. Most of the present writer's experience has been gained in the jungles of the central parts of the continent, where hilly ground predominates; and he has found by sad experience that to depend too much on the opinions of even a Forsyth or a Sterndale is often productive of failure.

Few of us nowadays have the opportunity of working out our own rules regarding *shikár*, but it is better to endeavour to do this than to place too much reliance on what one reads, thereby filling the mind with "sealed-pattern" ideas which are bound to prove misleading, especially if applied to portions of the country where they are unsuitable. For instance, in the more or less hilly country in which the writer has *shikár'd*, the *nullah* theory about tigers is all fudge. At night, when searching for prey, tigers hang about the river-beds, because the pools in them attract the deer and other tribes of the *ungulata;* but during the heat of day, although the beds of the streams may offer unusual attractions in the direction of shade and water, they prefer a little shade—sometimes very little of that—on the higher portions of breezy hill-

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sides. In fact they live much as do bison, that is to say, in the hot season; at other times of year their habits seem even more elastic. One of the best *shikáris* I knew in those parts gave it as his opinion that "our tigers" should be beaten for exactly as in the case of sámbar. Another useful "tip" to remember is never to beat a tiger back over his "kill"; which sounds obvious, but is not always borne in mind. Again, especially in hills, felines are much given to using the jungle paths, even in open grass, especially if ascending. The knowledge of local habits of game will thus often enable one to encompass an apparently hopelessly large extent of thick jungle with but a few men. For this reason a good understanding is necessary with the jungle men, who "know the ropes," and who, even in the most hopeless-looking cases, are often able to give information of the greatest value.

"Sitting up" for felines is a method of shooting that is apparently not very well understood. It is looked down on by many sportsmen as a sort of poaching dodge, especially by the kind of man who likes to do his shooting in company and "style," with a big camp and lots of fun and good drink. The result is that some men avoid it, or, if they try it, avoid writing on the subject. Others, on the contrary, are able to see the true sporting side of it—Sanderson for one, a man whose views on *shikár*, as expressed in his *Thirteen Years among the Wild Beasts*, seem to be among the most accurate and reliable of all Indian sportsmen who have put pen to paper. The fact is that, generally speaking, beating is the method of the party, "sitting up" that of the solitary hunter; and the votaries of each form of sport must please themselves.

"Sitting up" over "kills" of felines for the marauder's return is often apparently looked on as a superlatively easy form of shooting, perhaps because sometimes successfully indulged in by mere tyros. It is also believed to involve to too great an extent the element of "luck."

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There is something, no doubt, behind such views, but the crux of the matter is that too much is usually left to chance in this form of hunting.

The tiger or panther kills for *food* in the vast majority of cases, and his usual method is to divide his meal into two portions. Since he usually kills his prey during the night, he has time, as a rule, for a decent meal immediately after he has secured it; this being meal number one. Next evening he returns (or intends to return) for meal number two. After this it is a most unusual proceeding for him to return to the carcase a third time; which seems natural enough, that which may remain being probably neither sufficient nor appetising enough to tempt his palate.

Taking the tiger and panther together (although their habits vary according to locality, and the tiger seems more cautious than his spotted congener), it may be assumed that they will not go away any further than necessary when day breaks and puts an end to their first meal. Nor do they (especially the leopard) seem to regard water in every case as a *sine quâ non*. In some cases they may then "lie up" quite close to the "kill." The preparation of the shooter's hiding-place should therefore be carried out as silently as possible, and really early in the day, so that all may be quiet during afternoon and evening. In some cases it is even advisable to erect it beforehand—when the bait is picketed out. In this case, however, the bait must be so securely fastened that the tiger cannot break the rope and drag his "kill" away, and this may render him suspicious and prevent his return. Care should therefore be taken to erect the *machán* early, quietly, and high up a tree, never to move the "kill" if possible, to sit *alone*, to eliminate the chance of the slightest noise or movement being conveyed to a listening creature, and therefore to make one's self comfortable, for cramped limbs mean noise and movement in time. There are other requisite arrange-

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ments, but these are the main points. It should be remembered in favour of the quiet beat and the watcher's vigil that, if no shot be obtained, they have not disturbed the jungle; besides which there is much to recommend them to the man of small means.

A difficulty is sometimes experienced by sportsmen in temporarily treating and preserving from injury the skins of tigers and other animals shot; the usual practice in India being to peg out the skin in the shade, and dry it with the aid of wood ashes, alum, or other astringents and alkalies. After such drying the skin becomes extremely stiff, and has to be carried about in that condition, in which it may receive injuries, jeopardising its appearance on being finally cured. Such troubles, as well as those of "pickling barrels," in which the fresh skin is immersed in a saturated solution of alum and salt, but must be carefully shielded from contact with the air, may be avoided by employing a *chamár* or *dhór* (native leather worker and curer). These men are to be found in almost any bazaar, and are quite willing to accompany a shooting expedition for a small monthly remuneration. Their methods vary, and they should not be allowed to work except under superintendence; but the following system is one that they thoroughly understand, while it is very simple, non-poisonous, and will cure skins perfectly, without having the least injurious effect as is produced by the use of lime and like deleterious substances which make it extremely difficult for the taxidermist to ensure good results when the skin is finally taken Home.

First day.—As soon as possible after the beast has been shot, the *dhór* should set to work, and the skin should be carefully removed, special care being taken that the ears, paws, and lips are thoroughly turned inside out and skinned right down to the tips.

The *dhór* then shaves the skin with his currier's knife (*kúrpi*), removing all vestiges of fleshy matter. He then

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rubs in, very thoroughly, powdered alum six parts to saltpetre one part, until the skin is saturated with the mixture, when a little will remain unabsorbed on the surface.

Fresh buttermilk (procurable in most localities) is now poured on the skin, sparingly, and rubbed in; and the skin is then turned inwards, flesh-side to flesh-side, and its surfaces thoroughly rubbed together, until the buttermilk has penetrated into the pelt. (About four large tumblerfuls of buttermilk are sufficient for each such application in the case of a tiger skin.)

The skin is then brought neatly together, flesh-side to flesh-side, folded up fairly tightly, and put away for twenty-four hours. In this state it may be carried about, provided it is not exposed to the sun's rays or to too great heat.

Second day.—The skin will be found to have swelled and thickened, and the "dressing" will have completely penetrated it, oozing freely through the hair side.

The skin is then unfolded, again shaved, again dressed with the aforementioned alum, nitre, and buttermilk, and put away for another twenty-four hours.

Third day.—The skin is unfolded, and thoroughly dried *in the sun*—unless the weather be hot, when drying in the shade is sufficient and preferable—until *absolutely* dry and as hard as a board; which has the effect of tightening it, and preventing subsequent slipping of the hair. *In the case of a large skin this drying process may take more than one or even two days.*

Fourth or penultimate day.—The skin is softened in water, again shaved, given its final application of dressing, and folded up for the last time.

Fifth or last day.—The skin is unfolded, shaved, and dried slowly *in the shade.* The leather will now be quite white and fairly soft.

To render it quite pliable, the *dhór* may fold and roll it

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together, and, placing it between some soft substance, such as sacking, beat it continuously with a mallet or smooth-rounded billet of wood.

The advantages of the above process are that skins so treated retain unsullied their clear, pure white and other colouring. This curing process can be carried out on the march, and the skins may be carried with perfect safety and in a very small space.

Until "aired" in the sun, skins thus cured have an odour not exactly unpleasant, but very pungent, which effectually safeguards them from the attacks of animals or insects; but an application of turpentine will now do no harm.

Should the sportsman wish to provide himself with the wherewithal of treating wounds, especially those inflicted by felines, which are rendered so dangerous by the invariably septic condition of their claws and teeth, the following may be found useful:—

A strong glass syringe, a pair of forceps, some antiseptic lint and cotton wool, borax and iodoform powder, and a bottle of tabloids of perchloride of mercury.

The latter when dissolved in water, strength 1 in 1,000, makes the surest antiseptic lotion when used freely in the syringe. Carbolic and other *oil* should be avoided, as it is apt to seal or close up the surface of the wound.

To men accustomed to hunt in bracing temperate and cold climates only, the camp of an Indian *shikári* would perhaps appear unnecessarily, even absurdly luxurious. The hardy hunter from the North-West of America, for instance, used to roughing it with pack and "billy," might feel inclined to scoff at the appurtenances of his fellow-sportsman in the East.

But in the hot and enervating jungles of India billy-boiling and roughing it will not do, which is proved by the

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fact that there are no white labourers in this country. No white man can for any length of time undergo physical labour in India under a labourer's conditions.

Out here, even at the least unhealthy time of year, a few scratch meals or insufficiently and badly cooked food may soon result in dysentery; while the exertion of hard work under an Indian sun, if uncompensated for by rest, good palatable food, and a little reasonable stimulant, would as surely lay our hunter, however strong, open to the debilitating attacks of an ever-lurking malaria.

Plenty of hard work awaits the man who would ensure successful *shikár* in India; but the heavy extra strain to his constitution caused by the heat, peculiarly intense sun, and relaxing foreign climate, must be compensated for by a reasonable amount of comfort and attendance on his return to camp—which is fortunately easily arranged in a country of cheap servants and carriage—or most unhappy results may follow.

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PANTHER-FISHING IN THE MUNG-BUNG DISTRICT

"TO LET—Capital stretch of salmon river on the celebrated Auchenbosh water. Suitable for two or three rods. Grand sport"—(when the nets are off—on Sundays only, be it noted) —is the kind of advertisement one sees in periodicals at home devoted to the pushing of negotiable property; so why not, "Mung-bung District, Lower Sátpurás, fine panther-fishing, in pool 15 × 5 × 6 feet, for as many rods as desired. Magnificent sport—when panthers happen to fall in."

Joking apart, the writer experienced quite a pleasant little piece of angling the other hot weather, and landed a full-grown panther in the pink of condition. What though the rod was represented by a sturdy bamboo; the running line by the writer's own cracking joints; the treble gut cast by a hand firmly entwined in an agonised jungle-man's lank wet locks, his elongate neck, and long sinewy arm twisted firmly among the panther's tail; and the hook-hold itself by the insertion of that same tail into the spotted extremities of the unfortunate feline!

The hook-hold, be it noted, was about the strongest link of all that chain, so when we "showed him the butt" it was a foregone conclusion that that enlarged cat should emerge all dripping from his chilly bed, and slide, a gruesome and horrid spectacle, up the rocky landing place.

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Though panther-shooting, being a pursuit of such an elusive nature, can scarcely be said to comprise a separate department of *shikár*, there are times when whole families appear to have lost their usual circumspection, and are to be bagged by the exercise of the ordinary observances of the hunter's art.

Such were the three panthers of the Mungbung District. The first to succumb was the large male; next the female with the cub; finally he, the disappointed suitor for the paw of number two, who resided *solus*, by his lone, in a neighbouring ravine of misty depth. The latter it was that took cover in our pool of confined dimensions, and had to be retrieved by the aid of strange tackle, as already described.

The post track from Ellich to Chik winds through the bleak mountain ranges of the Lower Sátpurás, and passes close to the clachan of Mungbung. Mungbung is a large and thriving centre of the Korku nation, and comprises about half a dozen wattle-and-daub huts. It is one of the changing stations for the postal runners, where the incoming Royal Mail is cast down with a grunt at the village grog-shop, while the relieved coolie crawls within to drag forth his relieving officer. After an altercation, or a comfortable chat, aided by frequent passings of the fragrant "chillam," the bag is again hoisted aloft, and the retreating "chink-chink-chink" of the post-bells announces to the inquiring mind the fact that H.M.'s mails go forth on their unceasing ways.

The Mungbung postmen complained that a huge panther was in the habit of waylaying them nightly on their section of the road; and when they had talked for about a fortnight, my old orderly, thinking there *was* something in it, sallied forth to scout.

The old man is nothing if not methodical—it would be better to avoid the term lethargic—so he appeared in the main thoroughfare of Mungbung about sundown,

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nd, pausing awhile to express his mute approval of the shapely nether limbs of the village beauty, as she coyly retired within her husband's hut, called on the headman for shelter and water; and, after some conversation, retired to rest.

The down mail was due about midnight, and, fairly punctually, the distant "chink-chink" of the post-bells could be heard descending the mountain-side far above the sleeping village.

If there had been anyone awake in Mungbung at that time they would have heard the sudden cessation of the post-bells, before a weird yell came floating down on the night air—"Oh-h-h, Apoo!"

"O-h-h, Apoo—Ah-*pooh!* Apoo—*hay!*"

But Apoo, the post-carrier who was to relieve the incoming man, was "not taking any." He was either too sound asleep to hear, or too wily to undertake his responsibilities even a few minutes before his time. So the crying on the hillside proceeded, and the village slumbered on indifferently under the now vertical moon. The man with the bells ran through the names of half a dozen of the Mungbung inhabitants, including that of the *patel* or headman, winding up by expressing his doubts as to their ancestry and the antecedents of their women-folk. But all to little purpose. At last he retraced his steps, muffling his bells in a fold of dirty loin-cloth, and making a considerable *détour*, arrived at the village, an hour late, by devious paths. After this angry voices rose on the still air. Then, once more the "chink-chink-chink" set forth from Mungbung, and faded away southwards. 'Twas Apoo who now threaded the jungle, mail-bag on shoulder, spear and bells in hand; while Mhateen, his wrath spluttered out, lay snoring in the shadow of the village grog-shop. Midnight meetings with the denizens of the jungle were far too common to disturb the native passion for slumber of such as he.

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And so did the panthers of Mungbung advertise their whereabouts.

We need not linger over the very easy slaying of the big male, nor that of his consort, she of the postmen, she whose cub was wont to follow the chinking of the post-bells till mother, crackling the leaves alongside, or emerging on the post-track itself, would endeavour with nasty growls to warn Mhateen of the danger of playing with panther cubs in general, and hers in particular.

They ate goats; they returned to the remains; or they were enticed from their jungle at sundown to embrace a kid tethered temptingly nigh; and so they died.

The third panther, the disappointed suitor, he of the deep ravine round the corner, came by his end in a different manner. Hence this tale.

Has the reader ever squatted in a roofed-in rifle-pit? Has he ever been buried alive, and waked to the cheerful knowledge that he is hemmed in by solid, damp, heavy, scream-stifling earth—above, beneath, and all around; and that there is no human creature within half a mile to lift off the lid? That was how I found myself one sultry night in June in the Mungbung district.

Figure to yourself a circular pit sunk about thirty inches in the ground; heavy boulders ranged all round the lip of the pit; heavy logs arranged roof-wise on the boulders; heavy earth thrown over that; the aperture for ingress of the victim thrust full of thorns with an outer covering of still more earth; and a narrow loophole in front disclosing about twenty-four square inches of dim religious light. Into this dreadful place I had shuffled, feet first, a little before sunset—and been securely blocked up.

Freshly dug earth may have its uses in concealing the human effluvium from an approaching feline—but it conjures up the most lugubrious of thoughts!

Centred in that oblong patch of grey light, and looming black against the faint luminosity of the sunset after-glow,

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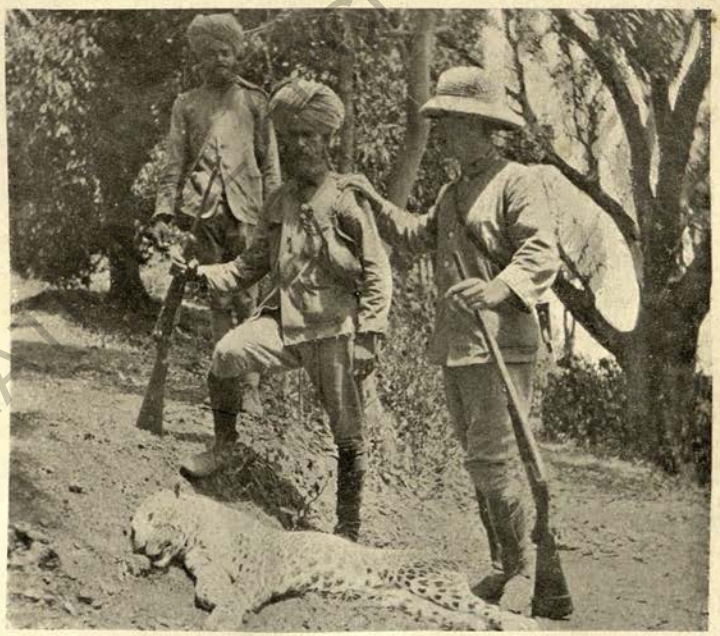
HEREDITARY INSTINCT



THE GOAT-SLAYER'S END

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about five yards distant, stood a wretched goat. Long ago had it ceased to tug at its bonds and cry out, as, alas! desired by me, its appreciation of a mysterious fear.—Why was it left thus deserted in this silent jungle? Where had its friends gone? *What was that crackle in the leaves over there?*

As some echo of the distant village retiring to rest, the tinkle of cattle bells, or a far-off human voice reached its straining ears, it emitted a faint, forlorn *"Baa-a-a!"* Hardly discernible in the waning light, its head was turned apprehensively first here, then there, with sudden sharp bobbings.

A mournful, horrible silence brooded everywhere. On the outer layer of earth above our heads a slight patter reminded us that local thunderstorms had been hanging about all afternoon and evening. A sudden flash startled goat and self, and, alarmingly quickly after it, came a deep reverberation rolling sonorously among the encircling mountains. So then, to the already long tale of thought, was to be added the uncomfortable anticipation of receiving a few thousand volts of the electric fluid from the only too perfect contact of the surrounding damp earth!

The storm rolled up quickly. Faster and faster fell the pattering raindrops. Small particles of wet mould fell between coat-collar and neck. Outside all was as black as within, save when the brilliant flashes showed a swift, sharp picture of dripping foliage and huddled goat. After a while the roofing above us seemed to bind under the action of the raindrops, and no more earth fell from the ceiling.

Seizing the opportunity afforded by the noisy elements, I groped about me in my living tomb, and, finding the haversack and water-bottle, indulged in a hasty meal; after which, persuaded of its absolute safety by some experience of panthers shot from similar graves, with a big

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cheroot between my teeth the while, I sought the soothings of tobacco.

The rain had now passed away. I could hear it still falling heavily, further down the glen. The jungle around pattered with continuous dripping; and mingled with the smoke of my fragrant weed, came that wonderful scent of fresh-soaked earth in a tropic land. There was no moon that night, but as the thunder died away in splutterings, the sky began to clear again, and that patch of dim light, star-pricked now, came once more through the loophole.

Whether it is the never-ceasing stream of thought that flows through the mind while "sitting up" in the jungle, or the entire absence thereof, time slips by in an extraordinary manner on such occasions. My watch having recently broken down under a long and systematic course of ill-treatment, it was not easy to make even approximate guesses at the time of night. No familiar planet or constellation was visible through the loophole. And so it may have been at any time up to midnight that the dull, settled patience of my vigil was rewarded. A bank of fat clouds had again collected, and the night had become almost impenetrably dark. A few suspicious sounds of the most intense faintness had been suggested to my ears now pricked to gather—with opened mouth—such minute microphonic disturbances of the quietness.

"Here he comes," every sense seemed to say, and sure enough, next moment, there was a sudden loud "*Baa!*" from the unfortunate bait, and a rolling and a tugging almost within reach of my hand.

The barrel of the gun loaded with slugs pushed quickly through the little loophole—by "feel," that is to say, for no glimmer of light was there to see by. Without there reigned a deep silence. After a while came a slow deep sniff. I ground the glowing end of the cheroot into the earth at my feet, and swiftly covered it up: grabbed the soft hat off my head, and stealthily slid it over the loophole.

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For a very long time there came not the slightest sound, but at last I seemed to hear a sniffing away behind me, and, therefore, at the back-door of my narrow domicile! After another long pause, during which I nobly conquered an almost overpowering desire to sneeze, a little earth came falling from the side of the pit with a soft pattering on the haversack. I stretched out a gentle hand and removed the latter. The earth continued to fall, but now noiselessly, on the floor of the excavation.

When at last my outstretched numbed arm had almost refused to hold the hat in place a moment longer, there came a sudden wrenching, tearing sound from the front. The beast, whatever it was, its suspicions lulled, had returned to its prey.

Gently the loophole was again exposed; a faint luminosity showed through. Strained though the eyes might be to their fullest power, it was only by looking somewhat to the side that a mere suggestion of a misshapen darkness became evident—and that was doubtless the body of the fallen goat. Very faint noises were to be heard—although, be it remembered, only some fifteen feet divided their author from me—and now and then the indistinct blackness of what was supposed to be the goat's body seemed to be obscured. A tugging set in, first gentle, then more deliberate and forceful.

That the beast might soon succeed in removing the carcase of the goat was evident. Even should he be unable to effect this and sit down to a meal on the spot, what guarantee was there that he would still be there at the earliest streaks of dawn!

Again and again I levelled the gun. Again and again it was lowered. Suddenly the darkness of the dead goat became more palpably eclipsed. I rested the barrels more or less level with the ground line, level with my face, raised them a little, and quickly fired.

I was aware of a choking cloud of black-powder smoke,

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and a sort of heavy rolling sound. Next instant there burst out a succession of those rattling throaty sounds which one soon learns to associate with a turn of luck, and the beast went rolling down the slope away from the pit. Still listening intently, face glued to the little loophole, the rollings were heard to quicken; then came the cracking of branches; and some time later a distant thud. The panther had rolled away and fallen into the rocky bed of the very *khóra* which he inhabited!

It was not very long after this, the reader may rest assured, that, in response to the sounding of my whistle, a light was seen shining on the jungle trees around, and, dug out of my grave-like retreat, I was stretching cramped limbs preparatory to a return to Mungbung. Tumbling over stones, and toiling up the jungle track by the faint light of an old hurricane-lantern, we made our slow way thither; and, laying me down on a heap of fodder in a Korku hut, I was shortly asleep. Although two more thunder-storms came up during the remainder of the night and forced me to change the position of my couch to avoid the rain which entered by a defective portion of the roof, it was comfortable enough, and perfectly clean. A Korku village, rude though it be, seems to be one of the most free from dirt and smells of all the habitations of the native of India that I have yet come across.

It seemed all too early that my old orderly awaked me next morning; but there was now no troublesome toilet or dressing to effect, and we set off at once to the scene of the previous night's doings. The rain had freshened nature, and though occasional sultry breaths of air rolled up from the glens where they had been imprisoned since the previous day, it was a fairly pleasant morning for the time of year.

Reaching the pit, the poor goat was seen to be lying stark and stiff. Its throat and nape of neck bore the usual punctured wounds, and the clotted gore round them

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testified that the panther had at least enjoyed something before being struck so mysteriously and suddenly from the darkness behind him. His tracks were plain enough, and we followed with ease the story that had been outlined in sound as I listened at the loophole six hours before.

Keeping along the banks, we examined the dry bed of the rocky ravine below. It turned a corner a short distance further down, and was then seen to sweep down to the edge of a waterfall. The woody sides of the dim valley below and beyond proclaimed that we had arrived at the brink of a very considerable cliff; and at that moment the diminutive form of a panther laboriously dragging his paralysed hindquarters behind him—so far off was he—came within our vision. The wretched creature, glaring back, saw us on his trail, and redoubled his efforts to escape. Tearing at the smooth rock with his claws, he appeared to be trying to wriggle round some corner that was invisible to us; but evidently without a knowledge of what awaited him. For before the rifle-sights could be aligned on him he slipped; slid away swiftly, scratching the rounded rock slope; and vanished over the edge.

The deep sound of a squelching fall came echoing up from the glen below.

It was about an hour later that we found ourselves standing nonplussed, below that cliff. Without the slightest clue to repay our toil we had searched all the covert of huge fallen rocks and twining bushes further down the glen; and had returned, to think over further plans.

Directly below the spot where we had seen him slide over the brink of the dry waterfall, we found the spot of the panther's impact marked clearly enough—on the steep face of rock. It was easy to follow mentally the path of the water when this ravine was relieved from the summer droughts. Then the stream, falling sheer over an undercut cliff of some hundred and fifty feet, would impinge on this

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rock slope, and thence glide, smooth and oily, to enter that pool below. Sliding down the smooth green rock, it would enter that pool almost without a ripple. But, although the surface of the now dry mossy rock-slope was quite of the kind that often cuts away one's feet and leaves one painfully anathematising the too numerous projections on the human frame, it was hard to imagine that a large body like a panther could possibly follow a path similar to that taken by sliding water. He could have scarcely been fit for much movement after falling such a height, with an already broken back; and yet there was scarcely a doubt that he *had* crawled away! If he had fallen into the pool at the foot of the rock-slope—a little piece of water in a "pot-hole" about fifteen by five feet in size—he must have left some trace of a splash! If he had then emerged from the lower end of the pool and crawled away, then equally surely he must have left water-splashes to betray that journey.

Going to the brink of the little pool, we glanced in. Festering and stagnant for all those long months of an Indian hot-weather sun, the water was of a hideous clammy green, and quite opaque. *Opaque*—therefore might hide anything that fell into it!

"A long bamboo, please," was what we shouted then; and shortly a Kórku's axe was at work disengaging a suitable "rod" from a neighbouring clump of those useful plants.

The water was deep, and the end of the bamboo found bottom with difficulty as we searched every corner with it, striking against nothing but hard rock. Then all at once the probe struck soft—something yielding and yet firm. The secret was out!

The Kórku rarely appears to display any overpowering liking for water applied externally, so it was to be expected that we should encounter some coyness when the suggestion was made that one of the jungle men should

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NO MORE GOATS!

ON TREK

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"have a dive." A somewhat plump youth was now seen endeavouring to efface himself with the aid of a neighbouring boulder, and the act betrayed that there must be something behind his anxiety not to catch our eye. Perchance he was known as a swimmer—an aboriginal Leander, wont to stem the monsoon floods when wooing his blubber-lipped Hero in some distant hamlet! Seizing on this youth, therefore, we knew a hit had been made, a palpable hit, for our choice was received by a roar of joy from the other Kórkus, who eagerly pushed him forward.

The local Leander was therefore conducted, protesting feebly, to the brink of the pool, and bid to prepare to retrieve. Realising at length that we were deaf to his entreaties—although he assured us solemnly that the panther might still be alive, *and bite*—he removed a grey and greasy head-cloth, and entered the pea-soupy water of the pool feet first, and very deliberately. Slowly sunk his head; a last coil of lank black hair curled on the surface amid a little maelstrom of oil and green scum; and the pool had hidden another victim.

After a while the waters broke, and the Kórku's head emerged. He dashed the scum from his eyes, and reflectively wagged his head sidewise.

Then down he went again. The spirit of the sport had entered his soul!

At last the diver rose to the surface, and clutched the rocky sides of the pot-hole with one hand. The other evidently held something. Rushing to the edge as the jungle man's grip relaxed its hold on the rock and just missed our outstretched fingers, we grabbed him firmly by that oleaginous head of hair. It slipped greasily through our fingers. A couple of dexterous twists, however, remedied that. "The bamboo!" I panted. My orderly thrust it into my left hand.

"*Belay there!*" I gasped.

"*Belay it is!*" came the response or its equivalent.

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"*Heave! Heave, heave*, ye land-lubbers! *Heave!*"

They heaved. The Kórku's head reappeared—the eyes starting forward in a scandalised but mute remonstrance, the great blubberous lips twisted agonisingly under that relentless grasp on his scalp-raised hair! But, noble youth, he stuck to his part of the job. Painfully was he drawn up, scraping over the rough rock. His hand emerged, twisted into a black and white banded tail. The tail was followed by the bedraggled hinder extremities of its spotted owner. There was a wild rush of naked feet and helping hands; a last heave; and I had landed my first and last panther in the Mungbung District.

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IN THE SAL FORESTS

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley.
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain
For promised joy."

SO said the ploughman-bard a hundred and more years ago; and, with a trifling modification, so thought we on our return from a distant shooting-ground of India not long since. Tired and weary of the worries and drawbacks connected with sporting expeditions undertaken in the more accessible districts, attracted by the novelty of exploration, and fired by the entries in the diaries of one who had travelled, shot, and administered the country some forty years before, I persuaded a kindred spirit to join me in that enterprise.

It cannot be denied that we had certain warnings. But what of them! For the last eight years and more had I not gloated over the old diaries, pored over the well-known maps, dreamt of the sportsman's paradise at last to be realised? And at length was not the auspicious time come?

"Shot out!" Was it? We knew something worth two of that. Those diaries! Even remote pastures change in thirty-five years, but the change could not be so great after all. I would be well content with one quarter as much sport as that recorded in the neat, old-fashioned handwriting within those musty covers.

And so the grand expedition started. The middle of

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the month of March saw a little wisp of dust crossing the blazing and parched face of the country, some hundred and eighty miles by rail and dâk from our starting-point. As it drew nearer, the tinkling of bells and rumbling of wheels indicated a species of travelling caravan, and shortly four *ringhis* jolted past in dust and glare. In the first there reclined a *sahib*, a man of parts, as the complaining wooden axles plainly testified; next came your humble servant, deriving certain consolations from a cunningly-disposed horsehair mattress and a large cheroot; *ringhis* numbers three and four contained various packages and bundles, surmounted respectively by lusty Karámat Khán—as much as could be seen of him through a voluminous *rúmál*—and by a bilious-looking and long-suffering individual named Chinnaswamy. A "squawk" of protest, half smothered in dust, seemed to suggest that the latter had found a tolerably comfortable seat on the hen-coop.

And so we rumbled on.

Night succeeded day, and day night; but still the word was "forward." Bullocks were changed; carts collapsed, and were mended; mango groves were dimly aware of nightly phantoms that paused to masticate a meal by the flicker of a hasty fire; the change of drivers made itself known, even in the slumbrous hours, by the varying peculiarities of their individual "savours." The feathery tamarind tree knew us by the empty "army ration" tin; the broiling stretch of sand and trickle of shrunken stream by the staccato objurgations of the frenzied *gári-wála*. On the third day dawn found us in the midst of a mighty forest, and hard by a forest post and hut. A short while previously a bull bison had found an unusual kind of grave in a well a few hundred yards away. "What was the water like?" we asked. "Well," replied the custodian, "perhaps the *sahibs* might not like it, but it's very sweet!"

Some ten miles more of the densest jungle and bamboo

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thickets found us nearing the end of our one hundred miles of journey by *ringhi*, when suddenly the conveyance occupied by the well-nourished man of parts gave way. There was not very far to fall, however, and the entire axle-tree having been detached, a teak pole from the jungle and a few blows of an adze furnished the necessary repairs.

We found our horses at the appointed village, near which the entire population was occupied in capturing the fish that were suffocating in the turbid puddle which represented what must once have been a large tank; and after a short rest, a ride of fifteen miles took us to our first camp. Hot baths and a good square meal served to dissipate the highly uncomfortable memories of our long forced march, and in the evening we strolled down to the river bank and regarded, on the far shore, the land of promise that we had come so far to enjoy.

Next morning we continued our marching, and found all the kit and carts delayed at the crossing of the river—splashing slowly through the warm shallow ford, or labouring in the hot deep sand. The crossing was diagonal, and three hours passed ere the last cart was forced with yells and shouts up the far bank and entered the promised land. Riding on, the thin jungle changed to trees of larger size, many green and fresh-looking. In some shallow valleys were the now hard-baked traces of rice cultivation on a rough and ready plan; and in many places we saw the impressions of the feet of the wild buffaloes that in the rainy season wander over this tract. Of course we at once fell into the common error of imagining many marks meant many buffs. We had not yet learned that one small herd of these ponderous creatures will cover the whole countryside with marks in a very few days and nights.

More marching brought us to the river again, having now crossed the big elbow or bend in its course. The country now grew more interesting. The villages were inhabited

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by Máriahs, the wild tribes that people the uplands of Márdián across the river, and were entirely novel. Well-built thatched cottages, each separated from its fellow, stockaded compounds, and very neat bamboo fencing enclosing each little establishment. On our arrival at our half-way place, by name Vayanár, we were escorted to a little building in the centre of the village, and prayed to seat ourselves, while one well-built young Máriah beat ferociously on a large *tom-tom* suspended from the rafters.

This little house, open on all sides, was evidently the Town Hall and Theatre of Varieties combined. Weird-looking carved wood maces and clubs for dancing purposes, so we were told, reposed among the rafters. Besides this, we heard later on that these "Town Halls" are considered by the young Máriahs of both sexes as the "abode of love"—places where—*pace* Robert Burns—the youthful, modest, loving Máriahs—

> "In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
> Beneath the big *tom-tom* that scents the evening gale."

The Máriah language is very pleasing to the ear, being very liquid, with curious soft gutturals and clicks of the tongue.

The men wear very little clothing, a thin strip of cloth, suspended from a string tied round the waist, passing between the legs from front to back, and a kind of *kamarband* wrapped round and round the waist, with the end hanging down in front. The rich Máriah does not sink his treasure in more clothes than these; but he goes in for a large and varied assortment of beads, and has the lobes and outer edges of his ears perforated to an alarming extent, and hung all round with a perfect bushel of brass rings.

A small-sized postage stamp would be a most effective substitute for the clothing of many of these weird people, but rings and beads they *must* have. A really "rich"

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Máriah simply coruscates with glass and tinsel ornamentation, especially, as I have said, in the region of the ears; while a village dandy will affect a "gem" or two bound over the forehead. Their physique is good, though most are small; and rarely is a dark-coloured Máriah seen. Their skins are wonderfully fair, in some cases as light in tint as that of a fair Brahman.

The women appear to wear even less, if possible, than the men, and are not loaded with beads, etc. Instead of this they are much tattooed all over. Extraordinary patterns are engraved on their faces, in some cases causing the most ludicrous exaggerations of expression. They are apparently extremely timid, and the sight of a horse—a mythical creature to them—sends the poor creatures darting off like deer into their great protector—the dense jungle. In the villages, however, they will walk past quite close without evincing any nervousness. My kodak films failed me, and so, to my regret, I have no snapshots of these ladies.

The Máriahs are distinctly interesting therefore, and we soon discovered that they possessed sterling qualities of honesty and truthfulness, while their willingly given services were a pleasure to receive. Aborigines they may be, but they are very different to the aborigine of whom one forms a mental picture.

Of the Indian buffalo there are two varieties, which differ slightly enough as to have received at the hands of the naturalist the separable designations *speiroceros* and *macroceros*. Sprung from a common stock, environment has had its usual effect, and, though practically identical, the two varieties display slight differences of horn-structure and habit, which are apparent enough to the ordinary observer.

Bos Bubalus macroceros is the long-horned species found throughout the Brahmaputra Valley, the Terai, and the Sundarbans. He it is who boasts the finer head, and is

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the subject of so many tales of ferocity and unprovoked attack amid the close and impenetrable mazes of his swampy retreats in the above-named parts of North-Eastern India. Of this creature we find record of a single horn in the British Museum measuring 78½ inches. If we allow one foot for the breadth of skull across the forehead, this gives a total "sportsmen's measurement" from tip to tip of 169 inches, or over 14 feet!

Speiroceros, meaning curly-horned, is the variety inhabiting the southern and eastern portions of the Central Provinces and neighbouring wild tracts of country.

Macroceros carries a head usually considerably longer than his congener of more southerly habitat—especially in the case of the cows—and his horns are generally straighter; while that of *speiroceros* has an appearance of greater stoutness of build, and the horn is often set on at a rather different angle. That the buffalo is essentially a reed-haunting, jungle-boring old pachyderm it needs but little perspicacity to discern. Those great plough-like diverging horns, sweeping back in easy curve, were plainly intended by Nature to divide the hampering tangle of his jungly grassy home, as well as to assert his authority over a ponderous and placid harem, and guard him from treacherous foes. Is it not therefore the decreasing necessity for such use in the thinner jungles of the Central Provinces, the increasing need for lighter armament on those more open plains, that finds the buffalo of Lower India equipped with horns different to those of his northern relative?

Then, again, the habits of the two varieties are dissimilar. While those of the swamp-haunting *Bubalus* easily suggest themselves, they are in no way an indication of the mode of life pursued by our more compact and active friend of southern habitat. *Speiroceros* is a great wanderer; solitary bulls, or a bull or two in company—usually a big fellow, accompanied by a "fag," so to speak—making very long journeys under cover of darkness, and

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travelling from one line of river to another, often over considerably elevated intervening country. The herds of cows and calves, sometimes accompanied by young bulls, are found as a rule in certain fixed localities, according to the season of the year; but they, too, are apt to disappear completely and rapidly if alarmed or otherwise set travelling; and, although they prefer an easy line of country devoid of hills, will climb considerable heights to gain their objective beyond. The hunter, therefore, must be prepared for astonishingly lengthy days of tracking; and he should avoid going on any but the freshest of tracks, and those at or near dawn, or he may find himself in for journeys of a duration quite outside ordinary calculation.

One of the greatest charms of buffalo *shikár*, in the grass and *sál* jungles of the part of India now referred to, is the tracking; which is often so easy as to offer no insuperable difficulties to the average sportsman. Although he cannot hope to rival the wonderful perceptions of the wild man, who lives all his life in the closest intimacy with nature, it is astonishing how proficient he may become with a little practice. Of course the climate is against us to start with, and that is no doubt why so many are content to moon along in the wake of their trackers, coming to the front only when the game has been found.

The best time of year for a trip after the buffalo of these parts is undoubtedly at the *mirrig*, or earliest rains, although there are certain grave disadvantages which often preclude one from taking advantage of this time of year, such as, to take but one of them, the difficulty of returning to civilisation once the flood-gates of the monsoon are fully opened and rivers brimming full. When the first showers fall, sending the released tiger, bear, deer, and other wild animals wandering far and wide without anxiety as to water and shade, the buffalo ceases his peregrinations of the open season, and, sometimes reunited in

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considerable herds, affects the comfortable life on open grass and glade land. Far from the river he may be. What matter? There are now innumerable pools and marshy depressions in this region that resound to the luxurious squelching of his huge wallowing carcase and the profound blowing and puffing of a monster at ease. This is the season of his loves. Here and there the soft clayey ground will be found ploughed and furrowed in all directions. Perhaps a ponderous strife uprooted those young saplings. In the distance a low deep note brings us to a sudden halt; the trees are all adrip with the last short shower; and as the early sun touches the jungle it glitters with millions of faceted gems.

At the end of a long grassy ride a shower of diamonds falls sparkling down, and a tree-top is seen quivering—which can scarcely be the breeze. Wait! Hark! Did you hear that splashing and that "click, clack"? What is it but the huge hoofs of our *Bubalus*, sucking at the mire as he slowly paces forward. And then a great grey-blue side! Another, all red and glistening from the mire-puddled soil—and see! the earth soft and noiseless for us the creeping enemy, leafy covert all abroad, a steady settled wind; we shall have no difficulty in approaching almost near enough to pluck a hair from those huge sides, and, unless tempted by an extraordinary length of horn, may spare at the last moment.

Such is the pursuit of *speiroceros* under the most favourable circumstances; but here again, although he has now abated his nocturnal habits and long expeditions, we must choose his track with care, and, above all, shoot hard and straight. Once crossed and intermingled with the scurryings of a frightened herd, the tracks of the great bull may be lost for ever; and that is beyond the art of Máriah or Gónd.

But most of us will doubtless pursue our bull in the open season, during the summer heats, when that malarious

jungle, filled with feverish exhalations and microbes of unknown venom, has been dried by a rigorous sun into the semblance of salubrity for the European traveller.

The position of these wilds the writer would not object to give here, were Indian game less on the decrease. They lay there forty years ago. Of which time I possess a diary then describing them—truly a hunter's paradise, to be read of with beating heart and watering mouth. They lie there now—Ichabod! to be mourned over; their day gone by, desolate, crossed at intervals by some rare, shy, phenomenally astute descendants of the once great herds now practically extinct by reason of murrain, drought, and, deadlier still, incursions of gun-bearing natives and gun-running merchants from that horrible country lying to the west, across the big river, where, at an even earlier date, most of the *ungulata* had become but a memory.

But the country itself has not changed much. In the western portions the ordinary dry central Indian forest covers its undulating features and clothes its rugged hills; but to the eastward the *sál* forests begin, their western limit strangely marked, so that a bird's-eye view shows their green line cutting north and south as if their plantation had been arranged by human agency instead of by Nature herself. The reason of this abrupt termination on a north and south line may be known to the expert forester; but my companion and I, although we examined the geological features of the country, were unable to account for it. Hence, for hundreds of miles eastward, the highly gregarious *sál* spreads its glossy green, almost to the entire exclusion of other timber, except where there are tracts capped by trap or basaltic rock, where of course the characteristic *salai* and stunted teak of this formation reasserts itself. From east to west of this country passes the river, leaving mountain ranges on each hand, through which it has worn an arduous granite-bound course to join the greater river on the west.

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Its higher waters pass over an upland plain for many miles somewhat sluggishly till they plunge over a fine fall stretching right across its bed in the abrupt manner one sees in the falls of the Congo and Zambesi. Hence it seeks a lower level with much greater rapidity, partaking of the nature of a Highland stream. Indeed its rapids and pools irresistibly remind the traveller of a Scottish salmon river. When the writer viewed his companion, salmon-rod in hand, industriously beguiling the wily *mahasir*, heard the rush of the waters as they tumultuously entered a broad deep pool, and, above their roar, the musical screaming of the winch, he shut his eyes to the vivid green of the *sál* forests around him, and to the piercing rays of the declining tropic sun, and, with but a small stretch of the imagination, was back amid youthful scenes by banks of Ness or tumbling Awe. While encamped by its shores that river was an ever-pleasant feature of our trip. Those enforced and weary days of waiting, that the big-game hunter knows so well, were to us all too short. Rod in hand, the hours, even under a broiling sun, passed rapidly away. *Mahasir*, our old friend *Barbus tor*, inhabited each thundering run and oily depth of that enchanting stream; and bold sometimes, coy usually, strangely full of guile for an inmate of so virgin a river, by turns rewarded and deluded us. The amount of good fresh tackle we left in that rocky eastern stream was astounding. Never, I ween, had the spirit of those waters reaped such a harvest of spoons, traces, swivels, spinning tackle and line—not to speak of a top-joint one disastrous afternoon!

Long shall we remember those rushing rapids; the granite-sided islets with their drooping boughs and ferns; the great solemn *sál* forest through which the jungle river ran towards the setting sun; and, when floating silently home to camp, down some placid reach, the indescribable charm of a scene unique, I fancy, in the "plains" of India! The very birds, the riverside vegetation, the shape of the

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violet-shadowed hills, were strange and unknown before. Numbers of the large black and red "Malabar" squirrel played among the trees; a cuckoo of entirely novel voice sent his four delightful notes echoing along the woody shores; our little boatmen conversed shyly in strange and dulcet speech. Rod, rifle, and gun would be forgotten, laid aside, in that warm sunset glow reflected from water as serene as the sky it pictured; then in the distance, round some rocky bamboo-feathered promontory, we would sight our little encampment overlooking the river-bank, and, gliding nearer, note our modest table and chairs set on some cunningly chosen eminence rising from the smooth yellow sand of a water-lapped shore.

It had cost us many an arduous march to penetrate to those—to Europeans—almost virgin jungles; long days in blistering Central Province heat; and struggles across country devoid of any but the wildest tracks, where baggage carts had to be lifted over immovable trunks of fallen forest giants, or a way cleared in the thick green undergrowth. And at last here we were nearly two hundred miles from the nearest railway, in the very midst of the country described in the faded yellow pages of the diaries kept by him who had explored these solitudes forty years ago.

To give an idea of the height to which our hopes had risen before we found what havoc a few years of native guns had wrought, I cannot do better than give a few extracts from his records:—

"*April 13th*, 1868.—Went to the pond beyond the river, and sat down in the open to await dawn. Four buffs, one I think a bull, came up, drank, and walked off. Too dusk to see. When it became light enough I went on their tracks and came on eight buffs. Tried to circumvent them, but they took a different route to that I had expected. Got on their tracks again, and unfortunately when in very thick jungle one of the cows spied us, and off they went!

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Followed on in the direction they had taken. Saw some *gaona*, or red deer. Going up the side of a small hill I threw two men on opposite sides of a ravine in case of bears.

"On reaching the top found high grass all about, and was looking about when up sprang a fine bull bison and dashed off. I had a snap shot and fired too high; but as I fired he threw up his head and gave a moan. I followed the tracks and found that he soon stopped running. After going about half a mile I put him up out of a *nála*, and saw by the slow way he went up the opposite side that he was badly hit. Fired two shots as he went away, both of which took effect. I then tracked him by his blood for a full mile with great difficulty, as his track was barely perceptible. At last in some thin jungle up he got, and went away hard again. Hitting him with a ball from the big rifle (muzzle-loader), he walked into the open and stood looking very sick below a big *mhowa* tree. At last he sat down, this last run having done for him, for although he got up and looked very mischievous, he fortunately had not a charge left in him, or at one time it would have been ugly work. Going up behind him the first ball from the small rifle had no effect, but at one from the big single-barrel he slept with his fathers. A very fine bull indeed, not aged, but with very fine horns. Cut off his head and tail and walked home.

"Went out in the evening after chital, of which there are very large numbers here to the south of the river and falls. At some distance from the village shot two fine spotted bucks and could have got more."

"*April 16th.*—Sent off kit to M——gaon, and went out at 3 a.m. to the pond again. As I approached it heard a herd of buffaloes run off through the mud. At dawn I took up the tracks. After a while we sighted a herd in another direction, and they turned out to be bison. We went round a long way to circumvent them, and came

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plump on another herd that were walking away to the hills. Unfortunately they saw us, and off they all went; so I let them pass, and went on the tracks of the herd first seen, but failed. After this I returned to the second herd, and at last came on them sitting on the side of a hill. Wounded the bull badly, but he got off after a long day, and towards evening I returned to the river, and my *shikáris* boiled me a little rice. This and plenty of Indravati water was my repast."

"*April 18th.*—Went out south of M——gaon. After going some distance spied a herd of bison. Had some trouble with them, and to my disgust bagged a cow. All the cows here are big and very dark coloured, and it is difficult to pick out the bull. Came on some red deer and bowled one over, which gave us all a run before it was secured. On the way home saw some buffs, but did not go after them. Marked the spot for to-morrow or next day."

"*April 19th.*—Went out after the buffs, but getting seedy had to return home early in the day."

"*April 20th.*—Went out and had a long day, feeling seedy all the time, but bagged a fine bull-buff."

"*April 23rd.*—Went out in the evening, and about sunset came on an immense bull-buff—a solitary fellow. Got up to within eighty yards, but being shaky with fever was nervous, and hit too high up. The bull made off with his head up, and getting into the open, stood looking about him. Crept up and gave him two more shots—but bad ones—being incapacitated by this infernal fever. Being late and far from home I turned back."

"*April 24th.*—Went out for the big bull. Came on him suddenly, after going a long way, but did not get a fair shot. Two miles further on came on him standing in the jungle. Hit him, but he went off slowly. Having been out all day, I returned to camp, six miles, in the evening, getting home very late."

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"*April 25th.*—Got again on the bull's tracks, and near Anantpur came on the place where he had been lying down. Beyond this his tracks led to water, and then back into the same stunted *Shorea robusta* (*sál*) jungle. All of a sudden the tracker started back. I went in front and saw the buff lying, as I thought, dead. I stepped back and looked at him from another point of view. 'Oh,' says Boodoo, 'he's dead!' I made a noise. Still no movement. I thought of firing into him as he lay, but unfortunately did not, making a 'cluck' with my tongue instead. Up sprang the buff and darted off at no end of a pace. We followed. I was so astonished that it was some little time before I could fire, and then the ball did not seem to have any effect. I ran some distance, and then getting on my horse kept the bull in sight. He stopped on seeing me, and *came at me*, but I easily trotted out of his way. The bull then disappeared. Boodoo said he had gone back. We then went round the nasty thick jungle, and we couldn't see well into it. I then thought of going in on horseback and seeing if I could find the bull. I did so. It was very windy and very hot. At last I heard a rustle, and, looking up, saw the brute coming down on us. I was walking towards him, and he was in full rush at me. I wheeled round my horse, he also, being frightened, aiding me in doing so, and so hoped to escape; but before my horse got off the bull reached him, and, butting, threw him forward on his knees! The good beast did not fall however, but recovered himself, and with one vigorous kick behind dashed forward and brought himself and his master out of the scrimmage safe. At one moment I had thought it was all up with both of us. I lost my hat. The bull was then followed up and finally bagged. In the afternoon a bear came rushing along at a great pace; but I bowled him over, and when my gun and rifle were both empty another came."

"*April 28th.*—When towards M——gaon saw two sámbar, but no shot. Farther on came on a herd of ten

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buffaloes, out of which I bagged a very fine big cow. Coming home had a long shot at a *gáona*, or red deer. Saw five more of these fine animals in the *sál* jungle near camp.

"Went out in the afternoon. The jungle to the east of this village appears a very likely place for sport. First we saw a bull buffalo, who however spied us first, before we saw him, and made off. As it was getting dusk we did not follow him. Came on a few bison grazing, but was frustrated in my attempt at near approach by a very wary cow. Took a longish shot, and as I fired they all made off, and close to them a large herd of buffaloes. There were also some red deer or 'Barasingha' in the long grass. Nearer the village shot a 'four-horned deer'——."

To give more than these few extracts might prove wearisome. The writer of them describes more sport with buffaloes, bison, tigers, bears, and red deer, during the early rains that followed—the *mirrig*, of which mention has previously been made. His notes show what a splendid head of game that country once supported. As the country itself is now no whit more cultivated and but little more opened-up than in those old times, this is a particularly clear case of the horrible havoc wrought by the native gunner. Many a tale the writer could unfold concerning the ravages of the poacher and the enormities of the horn-merchant in those tracts.

As regards the danger of hunting the wild buffalo of those parts, sportsmen appear to be somewhat divided in opinion. The writer of the diaries above referred to only once found himself in a position of danger, and that in the days of muzzle-loading weapons; and although particular buffaloes are noted to have shown considerable malice in the way of butting trees and making blind attacks on other inanimate objects when wounded, the majority seem to have acted similarly to those of which we ourselves had experience, showing the greatest anxiety to escape their

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puny antagonist and remove their enormous frames from his Lilliputian attack. However, some years ago, a sportsman met his death, in those very jungles, from the horns of a bull that he had wounded. The story runs that he had gone out one morning on the tracks of a big bull which he had hit the previous evening. He was armed with a heavy black-powder rifle—probably an 8-bore—and coming on the bull lying down in an open glade, he approached perilously near, in order to finish it off; and was charged. The bull is said to have chased him to a tree, round which the unfortunate man dodged, and on each side of which he then seized his pursuer's spreading horns. In such unequal strife the *Bubalus* and his opponent did not struggle long. The sportsman was tossed easily aside, and then terribly gored, one great horn completely penetrating his body. When the bull left him his retainers rushed up, but their master was beyond all aid. He ejaculated the one word "Water!" and was dead before their eyes.

Such calamities shock the keen *shikári*, and a narrow escape may teach him greater caution; but it is rare that these deter him from again embarking on his engrossing pursuit.

The jungle again exercises its compelling fascination; the mind's eye pictures its delights; the rifle—old friend—emerges from its case, caressed once more of fond hands; Time, healer of scars physical and mental, does his appointed work; and Nature leads the wanderer once more to her beloved solitudes. At first the hunter returned may start and handle his weapon sharply at a rustle in the bushes; a sudden clamour, or, more still, the harsh voice of a wild beast, may momentarily unnerve him; but gradually he will, with a smile, return to the old ways, and his experiences of the past become but additional jungle lore to enrich the memory.

But this is wandering from our *speiroceros!* Yet, after all, what is it that exercises that unfailing attraction that

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his hobby possesses for the true follower of Nimrod? Not the bare collection of trophies; nor, indeed, the mere satisfying of a hunting instinct. It is more than that; something that appeals even to a mind insensible to Nature's beauties, to her charms when sought in the forest or on the mountain-side. It is the partial return to man's pristine wild life, in a land where the artificialities of civilisation have not yet greatly affected the pursuit of game. It is that broad free feeling; the ability to throw out a wide-sweeping arm and say to oneself, "This is all mine to rove!"; and, besides this, the various interests to be found in the country, its people, its *fauna*, and their habits.

When I and my companion reached our land of promise, we found ourselves sadly hampered by lack of local knowledge and by our total ignorance of the habits of the buffalo of those regions. The river, split up in many places into gurgling channels that traversed a perfect maze of luxuriant vegetation, smothering innumerable islets in its embrace, and hiding deep dark recesses full of dark fern and moss, led us at once astray. All that we had read on the subject of buffaloes—from Assam and the Terai—as well as Forsyth's remarks on the Sambalpur country—led us to believe that if our great game were to be found here, it would be among these almost impenetrable islets. Thus we wasted time. The shy inhabitants—extremely retiring little creatures, true denizens of the forest, and timid as the wild beasts themselves—were extraordinarily secretive, and our own men were as much at a loss as ourselves. At this juncture we were delivered from our perplexity by Amir Ali, a Mahomedan shopkeeper, who lived in a considerable village, the capital, as it were, of the surrounding wild country. This individual was brought to our camp by our men one evening, and in the course of a very short conversation we managed to pick up valuable hints as to the habits and present whereabouts of our ponderous quarry.

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During an all too short sojourn of two months in those delightful wilds, we found that, with the exception of a wandering tiger at rare intervals and a few small bison, with, say, a bear here and there, and a very few sámbar and chital, the country was denuded of all game, save a few scattered herds of wild buffaloes. The mournful prognostications indulged in many years previously by our predecessor of the diaries had turned out only too true. Those keen hunters, the little jungle-men, aided by gun-running friends from over the border, had, indeed, done their work; and the "Márdián" country was swept of its game, save the hardy and dangerous *Bubalus*, attacks on whom were not lightly undertaken by their tiny foes.

To roam that magnificent natural game preserve was a melancholy occupation. Monkeys and peacocks were almost the only inhabitants of those grand *sál* jungles. Scarce a barking deer or four-horned antelope leapt the rotting fallen timber. No cry of wandering spotted stag or whistle of herding hind disturbed the deep brooding silence. The quiet of night was unbroken by the harsh cry of questing beast of prey—because there *was* no prey! Was all the jungle dead, then? Was it that the presence of a few wandering buffaloes had thus crushed all other wild life? Such thoughts would come; but, spite them all, what a charm in those wilds and that lovely river!

In one locality we brought a solitary mournful tiger to bag, and each of us got his first buffalo; whiling away the time between by good sport with the *mahasir* at our very tent doors. By lashing together a couple of *dôngas*, or "dug-outs," we were able to construct a stable boat capable of accommodating ourselves, retainers, gun and rifle, tiffin, rods, tackle, and boatmen. Embarking thus on one of those long, still reaches, away we paddled; shot rapids; tarried awhile by some alluringly fishy pool or run, consoled by the music of the winch, and passing the while a woody hilly panorama full of striking beauty.

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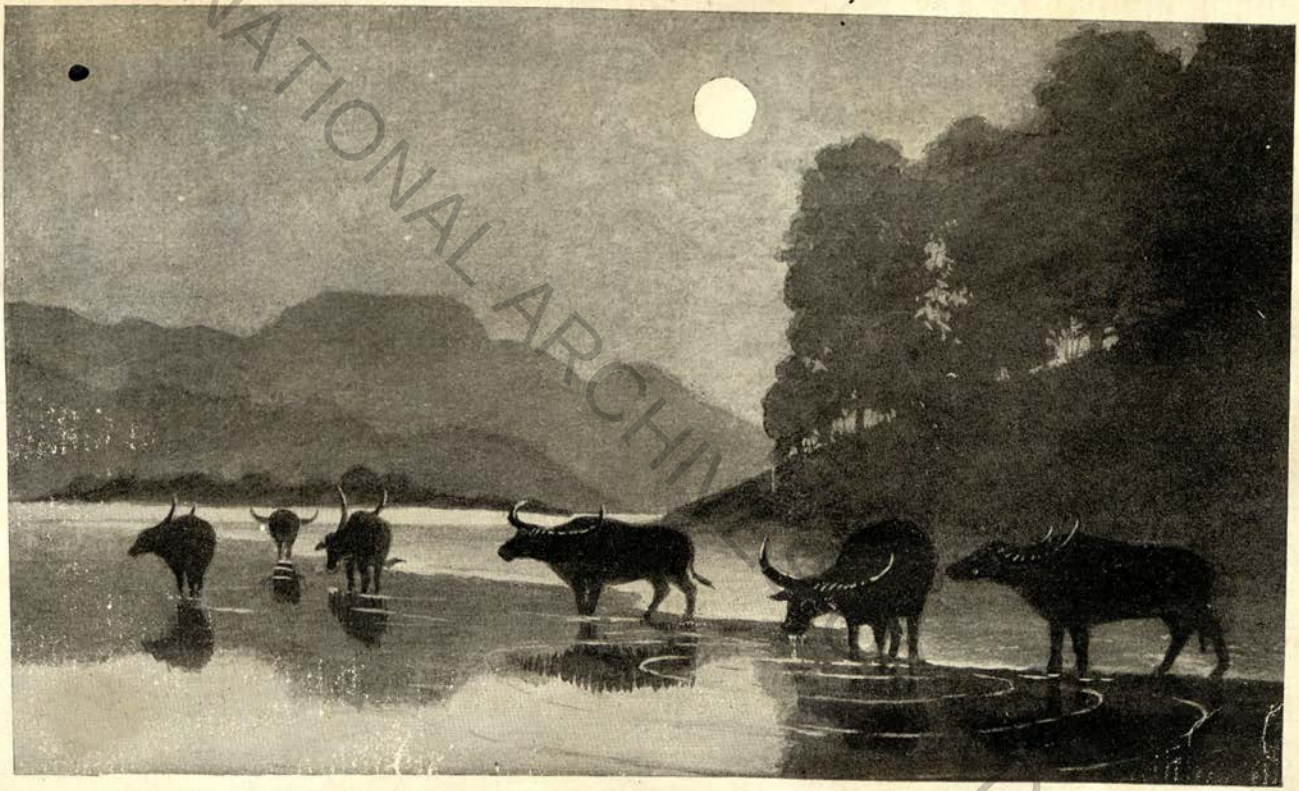

SPLASH THEIR LEISURELY WAY ACROSS

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At night alone the buffalo approaches the river bank. Moonlight on a silent and deserted shore discloses some great black rocks, so it would seem, that stand in the shallows with the ripples glistening away from their feet. Hush! Was not that a splashing in the warm water? Look at that promontory of yellow sand jutting into the dark waters from darker woods! An enormous shadow, clear-cut in the brilliance of a tropic moon, is creeping across it. There is the sound of profound breathings. Now, gently push the dug-out along the black shadow of this high bank, and wait. Slowly, ponderously, one—two—five—seven enormous creatures emerge from the gloom of the *sál* trees into the sandy shallows and, one by one, splash their leisurely way across them to a reedy islet. The shining ripples widen and slap tiny wavelets against our side. There is a distant crunching of gravel, and some low trees amid long grass on the island are being crushed through by heavy bodies. The buffaloes are moving slowly up-stream, feeding as they go among the rank herbage of the riverside.

At length the rustlings die away, and not a sound can be heard but the feeble chirping of crickets, an occasional low moan from an owl in the trees across the water, and the remotely-faint rushing of some distant rapid.

If we have the patience to haunt the sleeping river until the moon shall have crossed the sky to decline towards those wooded hills, those slow-moving monsters will at length return and seek the shore, and the woods that disgorged them earlier in the night will again close mysteriously over their huge forms.

Perhaps the skirt of that distant thunderstorm may extend and give the slumbering forest a slight shower. That would be well indeed, for by early dawn we should rejoice to find the fresh tracks so patent to our eager gaze. Here is the spot where the herd finally left the riverside; and, farther on, the immense indentations left by the feet

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of the master bull. The tracks of the herd lead a broad path away from the river towards the distant open grassy and sapling-studded country, where these pachyderms love to lie during the hot hours of the day; but the big fellow has made off elsewhere. Twice has he skirted the sandy shore and once entered a secluded back-water, where he rolled in the muddy sand. Here it was that the rain fell during the small hours of the morning, when he climbed the steep bank, and passed round that huge fallen tree, making inland.

The woods are waking now. A sudden commotion high above our heads, and a little shower of raindrops; red Malabar squirrels on the limb of a forest giant, rousing to their daily play up mighty trunks. Those four melodious cuckoo notes—whistled now, long after, and in a far distant land they instantly bring us back to that enchanted forest—echo through the vistas of tall, straight stems before us. Gradually we pass on. Glade land opens out, long grass receives us, still slowly pacing forward, eyes on ground, and a glance far on ahead. Again the tall-stemmed forest covers us. That bull is making for some distant ground! The *sál* forest thins again, and the ground becomes stony. Our little Máriah trackers evince greater caution, taking up the trail from the *sahib*, whose half-educated eye has lost the—to them—simple guiding marks. It is a little rising ground before us. Gently up to the top now, and put your head quietly round the trunk of that tree, rifle in hand. What! Not there? This little shallow depression among the knolls is well known to the Máriahs as a favourite lair of this very bull. But to-day we must pass on: he has only tarried here in seeming hesitation.

In such manner the *shikári* may encompass many a weary mile, during almost every pace of which all his senses have to be on the stretch. *Bubalus* is capricious. To-day he may be making for a distant spot, or, suddenly tempted

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by some, to us, unknown advantage, he may be loitering in the shade of those trees. Nay, at this moment he may be silently contemplating us, nose in the air, horns sweeping his flanks, and ears and tail suddenly held still from their ordinary fly-flapping movements, ready to thunder suddenly away, and from a heavy gallop settle into that aggravatingly ceaseless pace that may carry him ten miles before we have a chance of finding his suspicions lulled.

But to-day we are in luck at last. Patience has its reward! Past days of toil are going to be repaid!

It is very hot in these stilly forests. The big rifle appears to weigh a hundredfold what it did when we left the sandy shore this morning; and, in spite of a pull at the water-bottle, our feet, lightly shod in an ancient pair of brown tennis-shoes though they be, go not any too sprightly. See! A slight *détour* the bull made here to avoid a big fluted termites' heap, when suddenly—there is old Dabbi the Máriah crouched close to the ground; and the others, well to the rear luckily, all behind *sál* stems! As for me, a tree trunk is what I most desire to simulate at the moment. Am I detected? Or do the khaki breeches, brownish coat, and green-grey hat in any wise resemble the corrugated stems of *Shorea robusta?* Dabbi however begins to crawl, crab-like, in my direction; so, very gently, down I go too. *Góndi* is the only language in which Dabbi and I have common knowledge, my share comprising a few names of animals and a common word or two; but hunter's language of eye and hand is a regular "Volapuk," carrying one all the world over, and there is no difficulty in learning that "he" is lying in a slight hollow in that bit of a clearing ahead of us.

Delicious moment! Does the hunter not know it well, when the knowledge of having found his game, his presence all unsuspected, mingles with the suppressing of the eager desire to attack! The great beast is there, found at last;

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for the tips of a truculent pair of wide-curving black horns betray his position, and here are we planning how to get the better of his natural wile.

And a cunningly-chosen position the old bull has taken up! What wind there is guards the weak spot in his defences. Clear ground to the other spots of the compass gives him a commanding view down-wind, while his post in the slight hollow affords that advantage of forcing an approaching enemy to show himself over the sky-line. If startled now, a few paces would take him among the timber up-wind, and we should not get in that well-placed shot which alone will prevent a pursuit infinitely more arduous than the whole of this long morning's work, or perhaps, indeed, his eventual escape.

Here, then, is the advantage of a strong binocular glass wherewith to scrutinise our ground and endeavour to eliminate the element of chance. Old *speiroceros* lies almost facing us; but his eyes are below the level of our present horizon. No. To creep stealthily in, this time, would not serve our purpose. Time is passing, however, and something must be done. What if the bull should make off, warned by that subtle sense the operation of which we must have noted at times, and is apparently set in motion by the concentration of mind bent on the hunted by the hunter! What else but this indefinable transference of brain energy can it have been that on certain occasions has caused the originally unconscious, then uneasy game to rise to its feet with vague forebodings, and display a mysterious disquiet unaccountable to the external senses of sight, hearing, or smell!

Well, here goes!

"Dabbi, my little friend, do thou stop here! I, the slayer, will make a *détour* across the wind, and come in there, nearly behind of the *Barreh*, and among the *sál* trees into which he will make his way when roused. And then, good Dabbi, creep nearer, and show but that tiny

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black cranium of thine to him who, pondering, chews his cud in the hollow yonder!"

The little Máriah's crowlike eyes blink. He nods reflectively.

* * * * * *

It is with feelings of gratitude that the hunter at length creeps behind the afar-noted trees. The wide horn-tips are still down there, but are seen this time from *behind*. Fearfully is the breech of the cordite rifle gently set agape. Two shining cartridges are still there! A perspiring palm is wiped dry on the clothing. The little Máriah should be at work now. A hot, oppressive silence broods in the glade, and the somewhat quick breathing of the sportsman must be checked.

Slowly, certainly, but with a suspicious tilt, the great sweeping horns turn towards the thin grass that must now cover my co-operator, and so remain motionless. Anon they are gently tossed from side to side in their resumed *rôle* of fly-whisks. What can Dabbi be at! Some minutes elapse. The great ears are slowly turned forward, then back; then suddenly forward again with a twitch, and there fix stiffly.

A tiny dark object away beyond the couched *Bubalus* raises itself a moment in the yellow grass, then drops swiftly. The bull is on his legs instantaneously. What a monster he looks, even at a distance of two hundred yards: those betraying horns now laid back along the huge shoulders, and his stern looming gigantic through the *sál* saplings—a great black rock, immovable as the granite boulders of his native soil!

In a threatening attitude he takes a pace or two forward away from me, and halts again, nose in air. I feel distinctly sorry for Dabbi, until reminded of his sprightly activity and ape-like powers of climbing.

After standing awhile in this attitude the bull turned

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and moved suspiciously off, first at a walk, then at a gentle trot, slowing down to a walk again as he entered the fringe of jungle, amid which his enemy eagerly awaited his coming. There was a spot where an ant-hill and the butt-end of an enormous fallen tree gave excellent cover, and behind this I had crouched, convinced that the bull would pass within a few yards and afford an easy and deadly shot; but, when that enormous bulk came into view, to my dismay he had turned, and was making off across rather open ground some hundred and fifty yards distant.

Anxiously waiting until he had passed behind a heavy clump of bamboos, I made a sudden bolt and darted for a spot about seventy yards farther on, almost cutting his path. There was a very slight depression here, of which, by bending down, it seemed possible to take advantage. On the far side of this grew a few low *sál* bushes of the kind that often form a very thick undergrowth beneath the parent forest. Creeping forward, rifle held ready, I peered round them.

Not fifty yards away my huge quarry had just come to a standstill. His great head was turned sideways, nose downward, in comical bubaline fashion. He appeared to regard something in my direction in a quizzical manner out of the corner of his eye. I remember noting his extremely venerable appearance and the enormously powerful short thick legs, dirty white below the knee, while overcome with a sudden realisation of my own puny proportions.

The safety-bolt had been pressed forward, and the massive breeched, taper-barrelled ·400-bore cordite rifle was half-way to my shoulder, but—a huge curving horn covered most of the vital spot, at any rate would probably interrupt the bullet.

Slowly, very slowly, that venerable muzzle was raised; slowly the great ears hinged forward; the massive neck bent; and the obstructing horn gradually shifted round.

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He is now gazing straight at me. The psychological moment has arrived. Nervously the sight comes to rest about the point of his mighty shoulder, quivers a little, and is forcibly, with bumping heart, held steadily——

Bang!

These deadly new rifles! There is no smoke. Simultaneously, with the sudden sharp recoil, the bull gives a quick flinch and twist of his body, and, turning before the left barrel can be got in, blunders suddenly and heavily away.

Reloading as we go on, we are after him, warily enough, however, on the toes of the tennis-shoes, eager for a chance turn to expose some vital spot in that crashing, lumbering, grey-blue mass.

But is he not cantering strangely, bearing off ever to the left, and heeling over more and more like some squall-struck vessel! A stumble! The colossus slows into a trot, a walk, and, standing an instant, sways—poor old fellow!

Then he rolls ponderously on his side, and over on to his back—a sight as incongruously extraordinary as an overturned locomotive.

Need one expatiate further, on the gazing, admiring, examining, measuring, and further viewing of the grand old fallen monster—on the clicking of the camera, the well-earned snack of tiffin, the cleaning and fondling of the cherished rifle, and the homeward path with lightsome tread? All that the hunter has toiled for—almost all—is o'er; and a certain reaction is felt, mingled with that regret which will perforce push in after the downfall of very big game.

But that mighty head shall be accorded the post of honour on already well-trophied walls, and thereon live once more to recall those halcyon days in beloved jungles!

All too rapidly will those days pass, and, with them, perchance our youth; opportunity perhaps gone, "wind"

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impaired, an Indian sun grown strangely fiercer than of yore, the hillside somewhat steeper. Until at last, the time of our exile o'er, we set our faces homeward—to the West.

THE END

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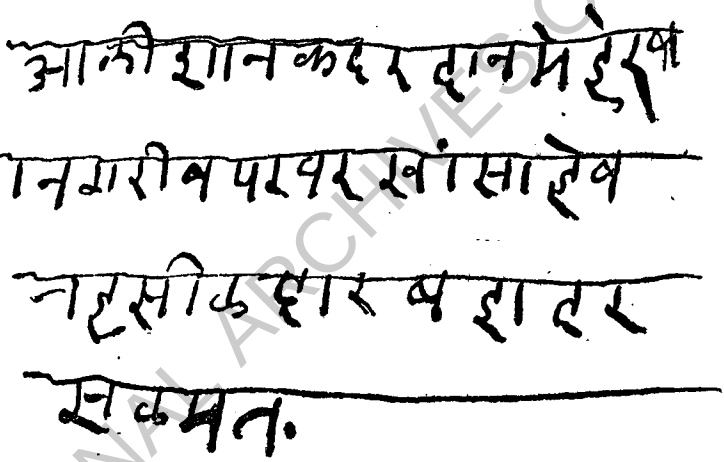
APPENDIX

THE LETTERS OF JHOOT SINGH

Being a literal translation of the letters of one Jhoot Singh, process-server, táhsil chaprasi, and some time *shikári* in the táhsil of W——, to that most exalted, kind, brave one, Luchcha Ali Khan Saheb, Tahsildar of W——. (All written very illiterately in the Hindi language and character.)



(1) The exalted one of high dignity, protector of the poor, appreciator of worth, the kind Khan Saheb Tahsildar, the brave, to him-wards salaams.

Let it be known unto your honour that the petition of your dependant is this that yesterday evening that English *saheb* to whom your honour made reference he is arrived in camp here at

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P——. Further——as it is known to your honour already those his servants who are his sepoy orderlies of whom there be four one a Kshatriya like your slave two Játs and one old Mussalmán who have for some time-space been making endeavours to spy out the land these very people have previously to your slave's arrival found that there is a tiger in this jungle of P—— and had tied *hélas* and that tiger had previously to the arrival of that *saheb* eaten one *héla*. Further——again last night was their tying of *hélas* and I had made representations before the *saheb* that on account of my knowing all this jungle and the state thereof he should permit me to examine the *héla* near Gat jungle which of all places the most favourite and the *saheb* said go Jhoot Singh and I will send one sepoy with in order to aid. Further——accordingly I went to-day very early morning and when in the neighbourhood of Gat I said to the sepoy see brother it is good only for one man to examine with great carefulness for this cause remain resting here awhile and I will go to see that *héla* if it be *gára* or if it be alive and so he sat and I went and the tiger having made *gára* was sitting near (the kill) and by beating on a tree with my stick he ran away and by beating tree farther on he ran away more and went quickly and without doubt is gone from this jungle of Gat so I called that sepoy and said there is *gára* taken place and surely to-day there will be good hunting. Further——and because there could not be found sufficient villagers for beating that jungle of which your honour will doubtless understand a reason so the English *saheb* sat vainly by night near the *gára* and in the morning I said we will remain here more days and tie more *hélas* for I know this tiger he is a very big old one and a great thief. Further—it is the patél of P—— that has much helped the *saheb* in this place and so I have threatened and struck with shoe according to your honour's order the rest is all well to-day the date the five May the signature of Jhoot Singh chaprasi.

(2) The exalted, etc., etc.

Protector of the poor be it known to your honour that again that tiger that remained yet in jungle of Gat had eaten a *héla* and that because of this occurring in a distant part when I was gone elsewhere it was that Mussalmán sepoy that this time brought

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news and so the *saheb* walking in the jungle met me and ordered that you go collect villagers for the purpose of beating jungle, and then by reason of my astuteness had I gone aside to see that place of *gára* and perform plans but as I approached near to it that old Mussalmán who is a very cunning man he had seen me so I had gone forward to the villages and collected some beaters and when at the time of noon the *saheb* began to arrange for beating jungles he called me and said that Jhoot Singh dost thou know this jungle and in which direction the tigers are accustomed to run and proceed away in this place? So I agreed and went to make arrangements and with us came the sepoys except that cunning Mussalmán he remained near to the *saheb* and when I had escaped out of the sight of those sepoys I went alone and taking with (me) some loin-cloth and white cloth of turban by arranging that cloth on bushes so that animal (tiger) did not run straight forward at the time of making the beat but ascended a little hill and went away to one side and the *saheb* called me and asked me this reason with great force and said "*Dyám!*" afterwards were there more two beats but there was no further trace of that animal. Further——the Kshatriya and one Ját had afterwards found the tracks that were going towards a far jungle and so there was an order to take camp near there and the *saheb* shot some deer and was coming there also. Further——in this other jungle there remains never any tiger but it became known to me that the very animal has gone in the direction of the jungle of B—— and that the Mussalmán also had gone away not saying any word and so I said to the *saheb* I will go to another good jungle also for the procuring of news and then I walked by night but first did I remain at the village of S——to execute some private works so when in the morning time I had arrived at B——there was present that Mussalmán sepoy and he spoke friendly words and was saying gladly see Jhoot Singh my brother how I am clever in obtaining of news for there is fresh news of two tigers in the *bandi* of T—— and wilt thou come this day after eating food and give help and I said first I will sleep and then will I eat and after that will I come——but soon escaping from his view by cleverness at once I went to that *bandi* of T—— which is distant three *kós* and in that village I greatly beat Raoji patél and

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one Phagoo *shikári* although they cried with oaths that there is no tiger here nor gave we any kind of news and then I remained resting in their house and so after giving warnings I relented. Further——when I was returned with lateness next morning to B——I heard afar off a sound of gun twice in jungle nor were there any men left in that village of B——on this my heart became fluid for I knew from this reason that there was beating and hunting of tigers. Further——the *saheb* had killed one tiger owing to the astuteness of that Mussalmán and the Mussalmán spoke sweet words with me saying see Jhoot Singh I have told my master that thou art a very good man and very clever on account of giving good news so he will surely give great reward but the younger Ját sepoy was then laughing very much not all at once restraining his behaviour but saying afterwards by a pretence and quickly how it was a big *tamásha* this tiger hunting and all the villagers climbing on trees but I knew that real reason of his laughter but by concealing my anger and making such sweet words and flatteries did I make all matters smooth and so even that Mussalmán was becoming a little unsuspicious. Further——and it is the petition of this slave that this foolishness be this will it in future not be thus to-day nine May the signature of Jhoot Singh chaprasi.

(3) The appreciator of worth, the kind, etc., etc.

Be it known to the kind Khan Saheb brave one that this slave had received tidings that there had been a robbery in that his other house of which your honour perhaps knows that it lives in the village of K—— and there is much jewellery remaining gone so I had gone there to make inquiry into that matter and had left Govinda forest guard to do my work in my place during my absence but Govinda is an exceedingly great fool and by reason of that word the *saheb* killed another tiger but I immediately caused to be written letters to all police stations and forest posts that our *Dipti Saheb* he is coming this side to hunt tigers and that on account of giving any help to this other *saheb* all people will receive much loss and beatings and trouble to their houses. Further——it is the petition of this poor one that he may be forgiven also that for his stomach there is not enough pay there-

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fore day and night is he praying before your honour that pay may be increased the rest is all well the to-day date thirteen May the signature of Jhoot Singh chaprasi.

Further——I have sent word to the villages on that road which it is told that this *saheb* is about to proceed and have again warned all police and headmen that whenever there is become any news or hope of tiger hunting they must make great difficulties concerning all matters of supplies and the obtaining of coolies for camp work and especially for making beats in the jungle but such people are always fools and there is fear of the Mussalmán who is showing cleverness like unto that of an old dog-fox also of the other sepoy people who on account of being foolish do not understand that it is better that our *Dipti Saheb* should obtain good hunting also are they in no way connected with me or with this *zillah* or there should easily be some sort of arrangements. Further——your honour is both mother and father and nobody but you is protecting me and it is known to me that Prem Sukh chaprasi has told lies to your honour concerning the matter of three hundred rupees and the house of a certain man who had come from Hindustan and in this word there is no truthfulness and this will I show when I am returned.

(4) The kind appreciator of worth, etc., etc.

May it be known to your honour that since several days because the English *saheb* who has come for hunting could find no trace of tigers then one of the sepoys came to village K—— where I was occupied in my private works and called me saying that come quickly and give help and so for the sake of my name which is very great in matters of *shikár* I went that very day and at the time of my arrival immediately that *saheb* called me and said that Jhoot Singh we people are unable to do any works without you for there is no help or news in anything and these rascal village people are giving trouble and certainly making villainy then was I secretly glad for it is so known that they the village people have indeed well obeyed that order but looking sad I explained much loss was mine and bereavements so looking in my direction some time then the *saheb* struck kindly the hand on my back and said that Jhoot Singh I have seen

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no more tigers although there has been hunting of leopards and bears and some deer therefore am I about to march now many *kós* to the westward near the village of K—— M—— where I know are some tigers and so I ate apprehension and became glad that I had been called in that time for in truth are there many tigers in that place and moreover it is the best jungles in all the taluk and there was intention of reserving it for the hunting of the *Dipti Saheb*. Further——again the *saheb* sent me forward to obtain news and this time by reason of the Mussalmán being sick with ague I came to that place with another sepoy and immediately it became known to me that in the *nála* of P—— there are three tigers in the near neighbourhood. Further——because the sepoy was looking always at my goings and comings for he had without doubt been told to do this by the Mussalmán I could not go of myself and so the forest guard went by my order to that *nála* and took with his gun and in cool time of evening made two four sounds of his gun also because there was confusion of hurry I had given him some newspaper of the *saheb* people to place on little trees near water for all that jungle was much beloved of tigers and there was fear that they might return or not all run away. Further—— during the moonlight night-time the *saheb* came without warning riding on his horse and slept lying on the ground and in early morning he rose and said come Jhoot Singh show me then this jungle of great fame that I have heard of and so taking me with the sepoy went to that *nála* now because of that fool forest guard's mad work there were clear marks of boot left in that place and underneath them new footsteps of tigers and immediately the *saheb* saw and so was astonished and spoke no word. Soon we went a long way and then saw again that by madness that profligate man whom I had sent had not taken all away so there was remaining near some water in *nála* a piece of newspaper hanging on a bush. The newspaper was not like that one which is all big and is then folded into smaller size but was of separate large pieces that each were inside one in one and of excellent good size for putting each piece on a bush. Further——the *saheb* spoke no word but began to look for marks of feet in the sand with signs of great anger and saying "*O Dyám! Dyám! Dyám!*"

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then after a space of time he pulled and took that newspaper and when he had read in it for a while he made sudden loud laughter and afterwards spoke in this manner that what is this word then Jhoot Singh that some enemy has placed not only white papers for the disturbing of tigers but also making such cunning choosing that he has placed this very one then making more laughters he said also that enemy is too clever for he has chosen such a paper that the tigers and other wild animals of forest will have great and true frightenings besides doubtless being stricken with painful faintness of the belly by the only looking at it. Further ——meantime your slave not understanding and becoming doubtful remained silent by reason of uncertainty because the *sahebs* have strange ways like magic and often smile when they are about to strike or greatly anger themselves. Further—— the *saheb* again looking carefully at marks of boots and making a little map thereof with pencil he spoke no more anger words but again often making silent laughters to himself so he returned to the encampment. Further——when I was eating food the Mussalmán sat and talked much secret words near the *saheb* and so when I had finished and had drunk water and was lying resting at that time that old man came to my direction and having spat on the ground said that Jhoot Singh it is an order that you now go to the jungle of B—— P—— for bringing *shikár* news but I pretended anger and gave abuse and so went at once before the *saheb* and made many words of people casting doubts on my works because some one my enemy in this village had done treachery in order to break my honour through jealousy and so after a while again the *saheb* became unsuspecting. Further—— remained in this camp four-five days and himself the *saheb* went and arranged the tying of *hélas* and every day in the morning time he went to see if *gâra* had resulted and was loosening the *hélas*. Further——from another direction during night-time there came a strange tigress to this *bandi* and there was *gâra* and beating of jungle but with fortune that ball missed and that day because of a great bravery which was performed by your slave in going near the tigress the *saheb* has become very pleased and made much praise of that work and the Mussalmán and other sepoys are looking in my direction with great affliction. This

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is written by the hand of Lálá a Káyasth in the village of B—— to the brave Khan Saheb the *salaams* of Jhoot Singh to-day date the 27th May.

(5) To the exalted, etc., etc.

Be it known to your honour that the letter of your honour is arrived at me and before your honour's presence the kind appreciator of worth brave exalted one, the petition of this dependant is that the word of which your honour writes is only falsehood and lying word without doubt it has been made by some my enemy and how shall I tell lies to your honour and I have always placed your honour's orders in my heart thereby how shall I render helping to this *saheb* but day and night am I engaged with great cleverness and astuteness and make much endeavours according to your honour's orders but these sepoy people are in these days become very cunning and so my work is being spoiled and they are continually looking to my direction and giving deceits to me in such a manner that neither by disturbings of *nálas* nor by taking away of *hélas* by night which is a dangerous work nor by placing of cloths nor by filling sand in waterpools nor by beatings of patéls and *shikáris* nor even by setting fire to open jungles nor by any kinds of clevernesses is that remaining any more success but this is a true word that only two three other tigers have been killed. Further——the reason of the killing of the big tiger of Karoa was thus-wise that by chance one Ját sepoy had tied a *héla* in some distant jungle and the tiger had eaten it and lay in rocks and so one Jaglia who is giving me help he was going there quickly and driving away the animal, but coming back he met that sepoy and that other the Mussalmán, so they caught him and beat him with much strength so that he is lying helpless in his house. Further—— because of my well knowing all that jungle I knew where that animal's home remained and where he was doubtless gone to lie, so I told the *saheb* and persuaded him by many words and eating of oaths that all the roads of that tiger were known to me and so took him to beat another jungle where by reason of the smallness of the bushes a tiger remains not ever, in addition that tiger had left no footsteps, so the *saheb* agreed. Further——by reason of

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ill fortune that accursed animal had not gone to that other usual place but was even lying asleep in this very small jungle so by chance so it happened that there was successful hunting and because of this the *saheb* became very happy. Moreover that Mussalmán could not speak by reason of that astonishing thing the mouth of your honour's slave also became stopped through wonder, but I gave flattering words to the sepoys and by reason of the days of his leave being finished that *saheb* is making much gladness on account of killing the big tiger during the last day. Further——the *saheb* taking aside said to me that Jhoot Singh thou art a very good man and a clever *shikári*, tell me then of an altogether truth and as if holding the cow's tail that has there from thy side been at any time any treachery in the matter of hunting and was it truly thy some enemy who drove away the three tigers from that *nála* of P—— for I have heard about sounds of gun also in the evening before I came to that place. Further——but I made answer with great sadness of countenance that it is your honour's pleasure that having killed tigers and made such good hunting that your honour is now making suspicions on me surely and without doubt some person my enemy has given false information but it is as your honour pleases and it is a word of great sorrow and to me there is great shame because of this word. Further——then the *saheb* looked at me with sharp looking for some time and made mention of many kinds of deceivings and the tracks of the treachery which had come to his knowing and I became afraid for I knew not that the *saheb* although making dissemblings was knowing little and much. At last the *saheb* became unsuspicious and at the time of his departure he presented me with some rewards and gave promises of returning again for hunting and said that see Jhoot Singh in this zillah of W—— there are many villainous blackguards of which some are of greater rank than tahsildars but knowing of their astuteness I became watchful so it is come about that in spite of hindering and treacheries I have killed some tigers take therefore this reward because by reason of thy bravery and the good hunting of the big tiger yesterday I believe that thou hast eaten my salt without treachery. Further——and then making many words of coming again in a future year and arrangements thereof

the *saheb* became mounted on his horse and departed. Further ——those my enemies will be saying that this hunting of tigers is due to your slave that he is deceiving the Tahsildar *Saheb* but your honour knows that by my astuteness and great works of trouble that *saheb* was much prevented because otherwise many more tigers would have been killed and the hunting of the *Dipti Saheb* greatly spoiled. Further——according to the orders will I proceed quickly this evening in order to make obeisance to the *Dipti Saheb* at the encampment of J—— and in the presence of your honour I am making petition that there may be increased pay and reward for the much work of this poor one and your honour is mother and father and to the kind appreciator of worth the exalted Luchcha Ali Khan Saheb Tahsildar the brave one the *salaams* of Jhoot Singh to-day date the second June the signature of Jhoot Singh chaprasi.

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GLOSSARY

OF SUCH HINDUSTANI WORDS AS DO NOT BEAR THEIR OWN EXPLANATION IN THE TEXT.

Am. Mango.

Achcha. Good. Colloquially—"All right," "Very well."

Akhára. Arena.

"*Al-hamdu-l-illah!*" "Praise to the Almighty!"

Anjan (*Hardwickia binata*). A jungle tree of large size and handsome appearance; grows near water in hollows.

Aola (*Emblica officinalis*). A small, feathery-leaved tree bearing a light-green, polished, round, acid berry.

Ap ki khúski. Your honour's pleasure—As it pleaseth your honour.

Babúl (*Acacia Arabica*). The thorny gum-Arabic tree. Very common on the plains.

Bachcha. Child.

Badmásh. Ruffian.

Baitak. Seat. Sitting-place. "Form" of hare or deer.

Bandi. Closed jungle. Government reserved forest.

Bandúk. Gun.

Ban Héla (lit. Jungle male buffalo). Wild buffalo. Also used to denote the bison in some parts.

Barra (or *Burra*). Big—large—important—of high rank.

Basti. Village—usually meaning a large village.

Bér (*Zizyphus jujuba*). A small and very prickly tree-bush, bearing quantities of a sickly, acid, little red-yellow fruit like a small crab-apple.

Bhagwán. The Omnipotent Spirit of the Universe. The "Great Spirit" of the Hindus, to whom all others of the Hindu Pantheon are subject.

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Bhálú. A familiar name for the bear.

Bhisti. Professional water drawer and carrier.

Bhoi. A caste of low-class Hindus who combine the profession of palanquin carriers with the netting of animals and fish.

"*Bismillah-illahu-Akbar.*" "In the name of God the Almighty."

Chágal. A leathern kettle-shaped water-bag to hold drinking-water.

Champa. A curious small tree of pulpy fleshy wood, growing, when leafless, a syringa-like flower of very sweet perfume and waxen yellow-white petals.

Chaprasi. An office "peon" or servant. A subordinate official of a more or less menial type employed in civil process, or as office messengers, etc.

Charpai (lit. four feet). A native wooden bedstead strung with cord.

Chinkára (lit. "The Sneezer"). The Indian gazelle. Its warning call is a sharp sneeze or hiss.

Chirónji. A small soft-looking jungle tree, bearing a sloe-like berry of considerable sweet-acidity.

Chital (*Cheetal*) (*Cervus axis*). The Indian spotted deer.

Chhota (or *chota*). Small—of small importance—younger.

Dak. Post.

Dewar. Junction of *nálas.*

Dhamin (*Grewia elastica*). The Indian lancewood tree. Usually of small size; grows in coppices.

"*Dipty*" } Sahib. Deputy Commissioner. (Indian "pidgin"-
"*Dipti*" } English.)

Fakir (lit. a holy beggar). A dervish.

Gaoli. Cowherd.

Gára. The "kill," the prey killed by a feline.

Gári-wála. Cart-driver.

Gharri. Small mud fort.

Ghát. Mountain pass or path. Also, bathing or embarking place at a riverside, etc.

Gónd. A jungle tribe of Kolarian (aboriginal) stock.

Hallál (lit. "lawful"). Usually used to express animal food rendered lawful for Mahomedans by the orthodox throat-cutting ceremony.

Hazúr. "Your Excellency."

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Héla. Male buffalo. Here used to denote a young male buffalo calf.

Hóli. A Hindu festival of a Bacchanalian, Eleusinian kind.

Jamadár. A kind of semi-military rank. A "commander of a guard." Here meaning the native assistant who controls a Government forest post.

Ját. A tribe of Hindus inhabiting the Delhi and neighbouring districts, and one of the classes enlisted as soldiers in the Indian Army.

Jawári (*Sorghum vulgare*). Indian giant millet.

Jungle. The opposite of inhabited land; it may be either a pathless forest or a mere stretch of uncultivated grass and scrub.

Kadbi (or *Karbi*). Dried stalks of *jawári.*

Kamarband. "Waist-binding"—waist-cloth.

Karúnda. Thorny evergreen bush, bearing a pleasant, slightly acid pulpy berry.

Káwit. A medium-sized tree with small leaves, bearing a hard round fruit the size of a cricket-ball. The inside is soft, and when dried and filled with gunpowder, is used as a bomb to scare animals from thick covert, caves, etc., in which they may have taken refuge.

Khákar (*Cervulus aureus*). The barking deer, rib-faced deer, or muntjak.

Khandi. An Indian unit of measure—twenty-five in number. A loose term for "any amount."

Khôra. A glen—small or big, or a deep ravine in a hillside.

Khubbar (or *Khabr*). News—news of the whereabouts of wild animals.

Kismat. Fate. Luck.

Koël. The Indian hawk-cuckoo. The "Brain-fever bird" of Anglo-Indians; possessing a beautiful mellow note that, during the height of the hot weather, becomes broken and discordant, and then particularly irritating to those who suffer from the excessive heat.

Kós. Indian measure of distance, equivalent to two English miles.

Kowa (*Terminalia arjuna*). A fine forest tree, nearly always found on river banks; furnishing a dark-brown extremely hard wood. Has a very smooth trunk and whitish bark, with numerous smoothed knobs and gnarls: see the tree under which tiger is lying in the illustration "At Home."

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Kúlhári. Small axe.

Kutki (*Panicum*). A small semi-cultivated grain grown in clearings on jungly hills by the Korkus. Has a small sweet grain not unlike sago. Grows about one foot high.

Lantána. A thick, strong-growing, weed-like bush with harsh leafage and masses of strong-smelling, reddish-yellow flowers. Forms a very thick underwood.

Láthi. Large long cudgel, similar to a quarterstaff.

Lótán. Mud-wallow or "soiling"-pit (moss-hag) in which stags and hogs delight to wallow at night when visiting water.

Machán. Raised platform. Watching-perch in tree or in fields. Any raised platform, in tree or otherwise, from which the sportsman may obtain command of view and fire during a drive or beat for big game.

Máharáj. Great King. Salutation or mode of addressing a superior or somebody whom it is desired to conciliate.

Mahasir (*Barbus tor*). The "Indian Salmon." A large species of carp which takes the artificial fly or spoon or other spun dead or live bait, giving magnificent sport to the angler. Weight not uncommonly runs up to 50 and 60 lbs., but much heavier fish are occasionally taken.

Máro. (Imperative) Strike! Beat! Fire! (a gun).

Massak. Bhisti's water-bag, carried over the back.

Mhowa (*Bassia latifolia*). A handsome oak-like tree, bearing a very strong-smelling, sickly-sweet, deciduous flower with a fleshy edible *corolla.* When this flower is falling wild animals and jungle men are greatly attracted. *Darú*, a very strong native spirit, is distilled from it. After the flower falls it forms an oval oily nut.

Mongoose (*Mangús*). The ichneumon of India.

Môt. An arrangement of leathern bag, ropes and pulleys, by which a yoke of bullocks draw water from a well for irrigation purposes.

Múrghi. Barndoor fowl.

Naddi. River. Stream.

Nála (also spelled *Nullah*). A watercourse—usually meaning a dry watercourse.

Nay (*Nahin*) *Sahib! Ham kaisa?*—No, Sir! How can I?

Nilgae (lit. "Blue Cow"). (*Portax pictus* or *Boselaphus tragocamelus*). The blue-bull. The largest of the Indian antelopes, of a distinctly bovine mark. Stands 14 hands at the wither.

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Pagri (*Puggari*). Turban. Head-cloth.

Palás (*Butéa frondosa*). The kino tree. A bush rather than a tree. Bears bunches of magnificent flame-coloured flowers growing from *corollas* as of sage-green velvet, and has strong, hard leaves.

Paláti. The stalks or plants of cotton.

Pán. Betel nut.

Panchâyat. Committee or village conclave of five respectable members.

Pardah (or *Purdah*). Curtain. State of seclusion or segregation.

Párdís. A wandering gipsy tribe who subsist largely by trapping antelopes and other small game, and snaring.

Patél. Hereditary headman of an Indian village.

Pawnee (correctly *Páni*). Water.

Pipal (*Ficus religiosa*). The Indian pipal fig. A large tree with light roundish leaves turning to a sudden point. Light-coloured trunk. Rarely found far from human habitations. Its piercing roots will in time destroy the best-built lime-set wall.

Pipaldá. "The water by the pipal tree."

Pug (or *Pag*). Footmark. Footprint.

"*Qui-hi!*" (correctly—"*Koi hai?*" or "Is there anybody there?"). A summons to an Indian servant by his master, and of the nature of "What ho without!"

Rabi. The cold-weather or later crop; usually consisting of low crops, as wheat, linseed, gram (pea), vetches, etc.

Ramnah (or *Rumnah*). Stretch of grass-land set apart for the cutting of dry grass.

Rausa (*Andropogon Martini*). An Indian grass (lemon grass) from which a strong fragrant oil is distilled, of great commercial value, as it forms the basis of Egyptian and Turkish scents, and is largely exported for that purpose.

Ringhi. A light cart drawn by trotting bullocks.

Rumál. Kerchief.

Saddar. Headquarters—of a district.

Sahib (or *Saheb*). Lord. Master. A term generally used by natives of India to denote a European, and sometimes considerably misused.

Salai (*Baswellia thurifera*). An extremely common gregarious tree. Leafless from December to June. Tortuous, twisted, whitish-yellow, scaly, soft branches. Exudes a strong frank-

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incense-like gum. As yet of no apparent use as timber or anything else.

Samálu. A weedy willow-like bush, growing in beds of streams.

Sámbar (*Cervus unicolor*). The largest of the *Rusine* type of Indian deer, and in point of size inferior only to the Wapiti of N. America. Exceeds 14 hands at the shoulder. Horns possess only six points. Maximum length 48½ inches and very massive.

Sári. The single garment worn by Indian women.

Séndhi. The Indian date-palm. Sometimes, also, the juice of this palm.

"Shábásh!" "Well done!"

Sháitán. Devil. Demon.

Shikár. A Persian word denoting "hunting," and used in India to express all kinds of the pursuit of game and fish, hawking, hog-hunting, etc.

Shikári. A hunter.

Sooar (or *Súar*). The hog—wild or tame.

Tahsíl. A subdivision of an Indian Civil District or *Zillah.*

Tahsíldár. The minor official in charge of a *Tahsíl.*

Taklai. A tree somewhat akin to the salai, but "more so." Grows larger than the salai, is less common, more leafless (being in leaf during June, July, August, and September only), and possesses an extraordinarily smooth, soft, skin-like bark which peels in large flakes.

Tom-tom. Indian drum.

Tópi. Hat.

Tur. A species of pea growing on a strong straggling plant sometimes over four feet in height.

Ujár. Deserted. Overgrown by encroaching jungle.

Worli. A raised oblong mound of earth or stones serving as a landmark or the boundary of a field.

Zillah. District.

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